Maximus the Confessor

Andrew Louth

ROUTLEDGE

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

St Maximus the Confessor, the greatest of Byzantine theologians, lived through the most catastrophic period the Byzantine Empire was to experience before the Crusades. This book introduces the reader to the times and upheavals during which Maximus lived. It discusses his cosmic vision of humanity and his Christology. The study makes available several of Maximus' theological treatises, many of them translated for the first time. The translations are accompanied by lucid and informed introductions.

Andrew Louth, until recently Professor of Cultural History at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, is now Reader in Patristics at the University of Durham. He is the author of many works on the Christian tradition, among them *Eusebius: The History of the Church* (1989) and *Denys the Areopagite* (1989).

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Andrew Louth

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PREFACE

This volume is intended to provide an introduction to the theological *thinking* of Saint Maximus the Confessor. I stress 'thinking', rather than just 'thought', as there is already a host of introductions to his thought. Maximus himself provided such introductions—notably his *Centuries on Love* and his *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God*. In these works Maximus presents his thoughts in pithy form as a series of propositions, or at best brief paragraphs. They have been very popular, and both of them are available in two different English translations. More recently others have provided introductions to Maximus' thought, or aspects of it: most famously and influentially, the great Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (Balthasar 1961, originally published in 1941). There is even an introduction to other people's thinking about Maximus (Nichols 1993). But what has been lacking so far has been an introduction to Maximus' thinking: and it is my hope that this book will help fill that gap. If it does, it will do that by providing, for the first time in English (or in many cases for any Western language save Latin and Romanian), translations of some of Maximus' major theological treatises, drawn especially from his two collections of *Ambigua,* or *Difficulties,* in which Maximus does not simply present his conclusions, but displays a theological mind, drawing on Scripture and all that is meant in Orthodox Christianity by Tradition—the Fathers, the Councils, spiritual experience—and bringing this to bear on our understanding of God's engagement with humankind, an engagement summed up in his assuming humanity itself in the Incarnation and overcoming the brokenness of fallen humankind in his death and resurrection. But the contrast between Maximus in his major treatises and in his condensed summaries is not at all that between 'theology' and 'spirituality' (despite the fact that the condensed summaries found a place in that great compendium of Orthodox spirituality, the *Philokalia* of St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth), for, as we shall see, even in

the densest of his theological treatises, Maximus' concern for the life of prayer and engagement with God is still uppermost. The purpose of theology is to safeguard against misunderstandings that frustrate a Christian life of prayer.

Many people have helped me, either directly or indirectly, in putting this book together. I would like to acknowledge the help and advice and ideas (whether I have paid heed or not) of Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, Mother Thekla, Catherine Osborne, Maurice Wiles and Fr Huw Chiplin. My greatest debt is, however, to Carol Harrison, who might be expected to have endured something as General Editor of this series, but as my wife has made this possible in more ways than I could say.

Andrew Louth
Feast of our holy father and confessor,
Michael, Bishop of Synnada, 1995

ABBREVIATIONS

AL	*On the Ascetic Life*
Amb.	*Ambigua (Books of Difficulties)*
CC	*Centuries on Love*
CCSG	*Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca*
CT	*Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God*
Ep.	*Epistula*
LP	*On the Lord's Prayer*
Myst.	*Mystagogia*
Opusc.	*Opuscula theologica et polemica*
QT	*Questions to Thalassius*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*

Introduction

1
LIFE AND TIMES

St Maximus the Confessor was born in AD 580 in the Byzantine Empire, or the Roman Empire, as he and its inhabitants would have called it. Fifteen years earlier the great Emperor Justinian had died, at the end of a long reign (527–65) in which he had sought to restore the Roman Empire to its former glory. To a considerable degree he had succeeded. When his uncle, Justin I, died, the sway of the Emperor in Constantinople had shrunk to the Eastern end of the Mediterranean—the Balkan peninsula (including Greece), Asia Minor (and on the other side of the Black Sea Cherson—in the Crimea), Syria, Palestine and Egypt. The Western part of the Mediterranean world was ruled by the leaders of various barbarian tribes, even if several of these claimed to rule on behalf of the Emperor in Constantinople. By 565 the Roman Empire was more like the Empire the first Emperor, Augustus, had created: a union of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean—*mare nostrum,* our lake, as the Romans called it. North Africa had been reconquered in 533; Italy was restored to direct Byzantine control after a long drawn-out war that lasted from 535 to 554; and the Byzantines established themselves in the south-east corner of Spain, with their capital in Cordova, in 554. Much of Constantinople had been rebuilt during Justinian's reign, including the 'Great Church', the church dedicated to the Holy Wisdom —*Hagia Sophia.*

But already there were signs of impending collapse. Plague struck Constantinople with devastating effect in 542, and continued to strike the Near East during the sixth and the seventh centuries, seriously diminishing the population of the Empire. Even as Justinian's armies were achieving costly victories in the West, Slavs were crossing the Danube and settling in the Balkan peninsula; within a few years of Maximus' birth the Avars had crossed the Danube, assumed leadership of the Slavs, had established themselves in a number of important Balkan cities, including Sirmium (modern Sremska Mitrovica: in 582) and at least for a time Singidunum (modern

Belgrade: in 584), and laid siege to Thessalonika in 584 and 586. And to the East there was Persia—the Sasanid Empire—with which Justinian had bought peace by paying tribute. Justinian's successors refused this tribute and and embarked on war that lasted for twenty years. The struggle with Persia was to lead to invasion and counter-invasion in the early decades of the seventh century that impinged directly—in more ways than one—on the course of Maximus' life, and left the two great empires vulnerable to attack from the Arab tribes.

In twenty years—between 630 and 650—the Persian Empire fell to the Arabs and the Byzantine Empire lost its Eastern Provinces, and in 661 the first of the Umayyad caliphs, Mu'awiya, made the Byzantine provincial capital, Damascus, the capital of a huge empire that stretched from Egypt and Libya in the West to the valley of the Oxus in the East. By the time Maximus died in 662 the Roman dream had faded, and the Empire shrunk to part of Italy, the cities of the Adriatic and Aegean coast-line and around the Sea of Marmara (including Constantinople), and a much-ravaged Asia Minor (and Cherson). The then Emperor, Constans II, so despaired of the situation in the East Mediterranean that in 662, the year of Maximus' death, he moved to the West and established his court in Sicily until his murder in 668.

EARLY YEARS[1]

Maximus was born in 580.[2] According to the Greek *Life of St Maximns,*[3] composed in the tenth century by the Studite monk, Michael Exaboulites, he was born of noble parents in Constantinople, received a good education,[4] and in his early thirties became first secretary at the court of the Emperor Heraclius. It has been shown, however, that Michael pieced this *Life* together from diverse materials, and that, for Maximus' early years, he simply paraphrased the beginning of the *Life* of the eighth-century reformer of the Stoudios monastery, St Theodore the Studite, omitting the proper names: from which we can infer that he had no direct evidence at all.[5] The evidence about his service under the Emperor Heraclius is, however, more secure, since it appears to be dependent on earlier material and has some independent attestation.[6] It looks as if Maximus became head of the Imperial Chancellery (the *protoasecretis*) in the comprehensive overhaul of the upper echelons of the civil service that would have followed Heraclius' deposition of the usurper, Phocas, in 610. After a few years, however, Maximus renounced this post and became a monk, initially at Chrysopolis (modern Scutari) across the Bosphorus from Constantinople. The Greek *Life* gives two reasons for this decision: first, his unhappiness

about the religious attachment of the court, and second, his love for a life of quiet prayer. The latter reason is perfectly plausible,[7] but the former is problematic. By 618 Maximus had already made sufficient progress in the monastic life to have acquired a disciple, the monk Anastasius, who was to be his companion for the rest of his life.[8] Six or seven years later (624/5), Maximus had left his monastery at Chrysopolis for the monastery of St George at Cyzicus (now Erdek, on the south coast of the Sea of Marmara).

It is from this period at Cyzicus that Maximus' earliest writings have been usually dated: several letters, including four to John the Cubicularius (one of the Palace eunuchs) in Constantinople, and several of his treatises on the spiritual life, notably *The Ascetic Life* and the four *Centuries on Love* (the second letter, to John the Cubicularius, translated below, is itself a remarkable brief treatise on love). It is also from his time at Cyzicus that Maximus came to know the Bishop of Cyzicus, John, to whom the earlier *Books of Difficulties* is addressed: doubtless it grew out of discussions that took place between the learned monk and his bishop. It seems, however, that the *Difficulties* were not themselves composed at Cyzicus, but after Maximus had arrived in North Africa. For after only a few months at Cyzicus, in 626, Maximus and the monks of St George fled south. The year 626 saw the great siege of Constantinople. The Persian army, having conquered Syria and Palestine, crossed Asia Minor and together with the Avars and the Slavs, who were approaching Constantinople through Thrace, made an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to take the Queen City: the Asiatic coast of the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus were the subject of raiding by the advancing Persians, and many fled, including Maximus and his companions. Maximus ended up in Carthage in North Africa: on the way it seems that he spent some time in both Cyprus and Crete. It is usually argued that Maximus arrived in North Africa by 630. The reason for this is his close association with Sophronius, a learned monk who had been born in Damascus and in 634 was elected Patriarch of Jerusalem. He had already left North Africa in 633, when he went to Alexandria, and yet Maximus regarded him as his spiritual father and abbot and must have been at his monastery called *Eucratas* in North Africa long enough for such a relationship to have developed.

So far the account of Maximus' life has been drawn from the Greek *Life* and the evidence of his own writings. But about twenty years ago, a Syriac *Life* of Maximus was discovered in the British Museum by Dr Sebastian Brock, which tells rather a different story.[9] According to this account, Maximus was born in the village of Hesfin, east of Lake Tiberias (the 'Sea of Galilee' of the New Testament) in Palestine,[10] the

result of an adulterous union between a Samaritan man and a Persian slave-girl. He was christened Moschion. His father died when he was nine and his mother a year later. The young Moschion became the monk Maximus of the monastery of Palaia Lavra, where he was received by the abbot Pantaleon. This Syriac account adds that Maximus attracted the attention of Sophronius— indeed it gives the impression that the brilliant younger man influenced the learned Sophronius—and that the abbot who tonsured Maximus was a 'wicked Origenist'. When he published the Syriac *Life,* Brock pointed out the plausibility of this account of the young Maximus: the Palaia Lavra was the monastery of St Chariton, not far from the monastery of St Theodosius where Sophronius was a monk, so the close relationship with Sophronius was long-standing. Tarring Maximus with the Origenist brush could be significant, except that the accusation of 'Origenism' was hurled about pretty freely in monastic circles. The important thing about this Syriac account is that, unlike the tenth-century Greek account, this *Life* is contemporary with Maximus, written by one George of Reshaina. Its hostile tone is explained by its Monothelite provenance: Monothelitism was, as we shall see, the Christological heresy against which Maximus struggled in the last decades of his life—a struggle that ultimately cost him his life. Its concrete details invite credence, and the tone would have perhaps seemed less hostile to Byzantine ears than it does to ours: according to his *Life,* St Theodore of Sykeon was the result of a one-night stand, and that was not held against him! But although the Syriac *Life* makes sense of his relationship with Sophronius, it does not explain Maximus' apparent easy entrée at the court, nor the evidence of the considerably greater learning than he could have acquired as a provincial monk that is found in his writings, especially in the *Books of Difficulties.* It does remind us,however, that we have very little firm evidence for Maximus' life before his stay in North Africa in the 630s.[11]

POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE EARLY SEVENTH CENTURY

Before we embark on the rest of Maximus' life, it would perhaps be useful to fill in more of the detail of the century in which he lived his adult life. We saw that the later sixth century had seen a long drawn-out war between the Byzantine Empire and Persia. This ended in Byzantine victory: a revolt in the Persian army led to the overthrow and death of Shah Hormisdas in 590. His successor Chosroes II fled to the Byzantine Emperor Maurice for protection. With Maurice's assistance, Chosroes defeated the usurper Baram and, having married

Maurice's daughter, regarded him as his father and protector. When, a decade later, Maurice was deposed and murdered, Chosroes seized the opportunity to avenge him by renewing the war with the Byzantine Empire. By 610, the Persian army, supported by Avar allies, had already reached Chalcedon, across the Bosphorus from Constantinople. The senators of the Queen City looked for help from Heraclius, the exarch of Carthage, who sent his son, also called Heraclius, with a fleet that reached Constantinople on 3 October. Phocas, the usurper and murderer of Maurice, was deposed and Heraclius crowned as Emperor by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius. Chosroes refused a peace settlement, and so Heraclius spent the first eighteen years of his reign engaged in an ultimately successful war with the Persians.

To begin with the Persians made the running: they conquered the Middle East—Syria, Palestine and Egypt—in 614 capturing Jerusalem and taking the relic of the True Cross, that had been rediscovered by the Empress St Helen, the mother of Constantine, in the fourth century. Eventually in 627 Heraclius led the Byzantine army from the north, through Mesopotamia, to the Persian capital, Ctesiphon, not far from modern Baghdad, where he recovered the relic of the True Cross. Chosroes was deposed by his son and murdered. The Byzantines quickly re-established their rule in the Middle East. Before this, however, the Persians with the support of the Avars and Slavs had laid siege to Constantinople. The defence of the city had been led by the Patriarch Sergius, who had carried the icon of the Mother of God around the city walls: the successful defence of the city was ascribed to the Mother of God, and the *kontakion* that now prefaces the older Akathist hymn was probably composed to celebrate this great deliverance, perhaps by Sergius himself. The changing fortunes of the Christians in the Middle East in these two decades (610–30) exposed the dangers caused by the religious disunity of the Church of the Empire.

BACKGROUND TO THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

To understand the religious problems of the seventh century, it is necessary to go back even further, to the fourth century at least. From the very beginning Christians had believed that Jesus stood in an especially close relationship to God the Father. In the course of the fourth century this relationship was defined by saying that the one who became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth is 'consubstantial' (Greek: *homoousios*) with God the Father: that is, that he is God in exactly the same sense as God the Father is God, save that he derives his divine

state eternally from the Father. This was affirmed at the first Ecumenical Council, called at Nicaea by the Emperor Constantine in 325, though not finally accepted throughout the Church until the second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople and convened by the Emperor Theodosius I in 381. As the so-called Nicene Creed put it: the Lord Jesus Christ is 'the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father' (what is usually called the Nicene Creed, that recited at the Eucharistic liturgy in both East and West, is in fact the creed endorsed at the second Ecumenical Council).

This uncompromising affirmation of the divinity of Christ raised in acute terms the problem of the relationship between the divinity of Christ and his unquestionable humanity. In broad terms, two approaches emerged. One sought to preserve the integrity of the two natures of Christ by keeping them clearly separate. In the actions of the Incarnate Christ, there could be clearly distinguished actions that are to be ascribed to his divinity—notably his miracles—and actions that are to be ascribed to his humanity—hunger, thirst, suffering, spatial limitation, in fact any kind of limitation. These actions came together in the one single life that Jesus led, but they were to be clearly distinguished, lest either the divinity or the humanity be compromised. Towards the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, this approach was particularly associated with Antioch. The other approach started from the affirmation that in Jesus of Nazareth one encountered God Himself, the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, living a human life. His divinity was manifest in his miracles, his humanity in his evident limitation, but though they could be clearly distinguished in his actions, they could not be separated, for God had entered completely into the limitations of human life: the Godhead had 'emptied itself', to quote Phil. 2.7—the Incarnation was an act of *kenosis*. This approach emphasizes the unity of the person of Christ, and emphasizes the paradox of the union of divine and human in Christ, seeing in this paradox a demonstration of God's limitless love for human beings. This approach was associated particularly with Alexandria, in the fourth century with its great Patriarch, Athanasius, especially and in the fifth with his successor, Cyril. Cyril was fond of expressing the unity of Christ with a phrase that he (mistakenly) thought had been used by Athanasius: 'one Incarnate nature of God the Word'.

These two approaches collided in the third decade of the fifth century in the persons of the newly-appointed Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius (who had formerly been a monk in Antioch), and Cyril, the experienced and wily Patriarch of Alexandria.[12] The

occasion for the controversy was the legitimacy of the title *Tbeotokos* ('Mother of God', literally 'one who gave birth to God'), which Nestorius could only accept with reservations. At a council held at Ephesus in 431, regarded since as the third Ecumenical Council, Nestorius was condemned for teaching 'two Sons'—Son of God and son of man—in Christ. Cyril's success was probably not much affected by the late arrival of the bishops of the East, led by the Patriarch of Antioch, John, among whom Nestorius might have expected to find some support. But when they at last arrived, they discovered the council over. A couple of years later, Cyril reached an agreement with these bishops of the East (that is, the diocese *Oriens,* the traditional area of jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch): in return for their accepting the deposition of Nestorius, Cyril agreed to a formula (in a statement called the 'Formula of Reunion') that emphasized the unity of Christ, and accepted the legitimacy of Mary's title of Mother of God, but insisted that the Incarnate Christ was both 'consubstantial with the Father' (the phrase from the Nicene Creed), and 'consubstantial with us'—the doctrine of Christ's 'double consubstantiality'—as an expression of the belief that he is entirely God and entirely human. Cyril died in 444. A few years later there was further controversy. This time the matter involved an aged archimandrite of Constantinople, Eutyches, who had interpreted Cyril's doctrine of the 'one Incarnate nature' to mean that, after the Incarnation, there is only one nature in Christ, a unique nature, that is not 'consubstantial with us'. He had been condemned at the local synod in Constantinople (the 'home synod') by the Patriarch Flavian. Dioscorus leapt to his defence, and set sail for Ephesus, hoping to repeat Cyril's success of 431. On the earlier occasion Cyril had ensured the support of the Pope of Rome. This Dioscorus neglected to do: and in fact Flavian had reported his excommunication of Eutyches to the Pope (Leo the Great: Pope from 440 to 461), and already received a letter that supported his action and contained a succinct statement of Christological doctrine: a letter usually known as the *Tome of Leo*. Dioscorus held a council at Ephesus in 449, at which Flavian was condemned (and so roughly handled that he died as a result). But this time it was not the end of the matter. Two years later, a council was held at Chalcedon (the fourth Ecumenical Council) that overturned the 'Robber synod' of Ephesus. This council sought to reinstate the agreement Cyril had reached in 433 with the bishops of the East, led by the then Patriarch of Antioch, John. Had it simply done that the ensuing history might have been less tumultuous. But it was necessary to incorporate the doctrine of the Pope and the *Tome of Leo,* and this was done by saying that 'one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten [is] acknowledged *in two natures* which undergo no confusion, no change,

no division, no separation'. Instead of being taken as safeguarding the integrity of the two natures of Christ, the phrase 'in two natures' was taken by many as affirming a dangerous duality in Christ, and, in particular, as betraying the doctrine of Cyril, one of those whom the council claimed to be following.

From the first there were many in the East who refused to accept the Council of Chalcedon.[13] Juvenal, who had supported Dioscorus to begin with but had eventually accepted the Council of Chalcedon, returned to face riots in Jerusalem. In Alexandria, Proterius, who had been appointed to replace the deposed Dioscorus, was eventually murdered by a rioting mob. The first attempts to achieve religious unity in the Empire attempted to lay aside, or at least ignore, the Council of Chalcedon. In 482, for instance, the Emperor Zeno issued the *Henotikon*[14] which sought to return to the authority of the first three Ecumenical Councils, and anathematized any who think otherwise 'either in Chalcedon or any synod whatever'; the statement of Christological doctrine in the *Henotikon* echoes the language of the Formula of Reunion, makes explicit that the Incarnate person is 'one of the Trinity', but avoids any use of the terminology of 'nature', whether one or two. The *Henotikon* found considerable acceptance in the East, though it failed to satisfy those who wanted Chalcedon unambiguously condemned: as the *Henotikon* received the support of all the Eastern patriarchs, this group, led by the priest Severus (later Patriarch of Antioch: 512–18), was called the *Acephaloi,* the 'headless'. But it did not find acceptance from Rome, that demanded nothing less than endorsement of Chalcedon and the *Tome of Leo.* Thus arose the Acacian Schism (so-called after the Patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, who was largely responsible for the document and its acceptance throughout the East), which lasted until 518. This schism came to an end with the accession of the Emperor Justin I, who put the weight of imperial authority behind Chalcedon. But that was by no means the end of attempts to secure agreement between those who accepted Chalcedon and those who felt that it had betrayed Cyril.

Despite the failure of the *Henotikon,* such attempts in the sixth century built on that document's estabishment of the unity of Christ on the basis that the person of the union was the second person of the Trinity. This was to make explicit what had been left implicit at Chalcedon, but affirmed what had been absolutely central to Cyril's understanding of the unity of Christ. Around the time of Justin's accession, a group of Scythian monks in Rome suggested a formula that might bridge the gap between Chalcedon and those who, in the name of Cyril, rejected it: this was the affirmation that 'one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh'.[15] The Pope of the time (Hormisdas: 514–

23) did not like the sound of it, but in Constantinople there were those, including the Emperor's nephew and eventual successor Justinian, who saw in this formula the possibility of a breakthrough. From the time of Justinian's accession in 527 this formula—the so-called 'theopaschite' formula—became the centre-piece of an attempt to achieve unity between the divided parties in the East and also with Rome. This theological position-once called 'Neochalcedonianism', but now more commonly called 'Cyrilline Chalcedonianism'— attempted to interpret Chalcedon in the light of the teaching of Cyril, and in particular his stress that the person of the Incarnation was God the Word, 'one of the Trinity', and that everything the Incarnate One experienced, including his sufferings, was to be ascribed to the divine person of the union. This was not simply a compromise formula: the appeal of Cyril (acclaimed in the seventh century by Anastasius of Sinai as the 'seal of the Fathers') was genuine, and even during the Acacian schism there had been an attempt by John of Caesarea to defend the Chalcedonian Definition as consonant with the teaching of Cyril, and largely expressed in his own words (taken out of context, as Severus retorted in his response to John). In the 530s Justinian sought to achieve unity on this basis: he failed, not least because there were enough rival bishops in various sees in the East to cause practical problems. The consecration in 543 of Jacob Baradaeus (Burd'ono) as Bishop of Edessa and his indefatigable enthusiasm in establishing a rival episcopal hierarchy of 'Jacobites' or 'Monophysites' (as their enemies called them) finally put paid to Justinian's efforts. Having failed to achieve union by negotiation, Justinian turned to persecution: the sufferings of the Monophysites only confirmed them in their beliefs and further deepened the divisions in the East, in Syria and Egypt for the most part.[16]

But Justinian's 'Cyrilline Chalcedonianism' was more than a tactical compromise: it represented to him and many others a necessary clarification of Chalcedon. At the fifth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 553, it received conciliar authority: according to the tenth anathema, 'If anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified in the flesh, is true God and Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity, let him be anathema!'[17] It was also enshrined in a hymn, 'Only-begotten Son', attributed to Justinian himself, and still sung at each celebration of the liturgy in the Orthodox Church: 'You were crucified, Christ God, trampling death by death, being one of the Holy Trinity,…save us!' Justinian's efforts were not perhaps entirely fruitless. The Monophysites themselves had problems of unity and particularly during the reigns of Justin II (565–78) and Tiberius I (578–82) some of the leaders of the Syrian Monophysites were tempted to join the Orthodox (Imperial) Church.[18]

THE SEVENTH-CENTURY COMPROMISES: MONENERGISM AND MONOTHELITISM[19]

It was these divisions, intensified by Justinian's persecutions, that were exposed by the Persian advance into the Middle East in the second decade of the seventh century. The Shah Chosroes sought to exploit them: in 614 he called leaders of the three Christian groups in his newly-conquered domains (the Monophysites, the Armenians, and the Nestorians, supporters of Nestorius, who after his condamnation in 431 had migrated east to Persia) together to a meeting. At this meeting Chosroes seems to have agreed to maintain Nestorian dominance among Christians in traditionally Persian lands and Monophysite dominance in formerly Byzantine territory. It was a great boost to the Monophysites: the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius the Camel-Driver (595–631), rejoiced at the passing of the 'Chalcedonian night'. With the Byzantine victory at the end of the 620s, however, the old divisions emerged. But Heraclius and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius, himself of Syrian Jacobite parentage, had a plan for union. This built on the Cyrilline Chalcedonianism of Justinian and amounted to the affirmation of one divine person, possessing two natures, one divine, one human, both in their full integrity, with the further assertion that this single person was expressed in a single activity (or energy, in Greek: *energeia*): a doctrine called 'Monenergism'.

It seemed a natural development: the Cyrilline phrase, 'one Incarnate nature of God the Word', would suggest, given the Aristotelian association of nature and activity, the idea of a single energy; on the Monophysite side, Severus could be cited in support of it; and both sides accepted the near-apostolic authority of Denys the Areopagite who had spoken of Christ's 'divine-human *[theandric]* activity'. The historical origins of this compromise are obscure, but it seems that in the 610s Sergius had sought advice from the Chalcedonian Bishop Theodore of Pharan (in Sinai) and the Monophysite Bishop Macaronas of Arsinë in Egypt, and made further contact with the learned Egyptian Monophysite, George Arsas, from whom he sought patristic authority favouring Monenergism. This compromise was tried out first of all in 622, when Heraclius was in Armenia (where Christianity was largely Monophysite)—unsuccessfully—then in Lazica (only evangelized in the time of Justinian, in contrast to the neighbouring areas of Armenia and Eastern Georgia) in 626, where the local Metropolitan Cyrus of Phasis (modern Poti, on the Black Sea) was recruited to Monenergism. After Heraclius' victory and recovery of the True Cross, Monenergism seems to have been the basis of the incorporation of the Armenian Church

into the Imperial Church in 630, and there seems to have been some success in Syria and Mesopotamia. But the greatest success for Monenergism was achieved in Egypt. In the autumn of 631 Cyrus, Metropolitan of Phasis (and thus called 'the Caucasian', *al-Muqauqas* in Arabic), the early recruit to Monenergism, was appointed Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria and Augustal Prefect of Egypt with the task of achieving religious unity on the basis of Imperial orthodoxy, i.e. Monenergism. He seems to have had some success with the Monophysites, with Monenergism being regarded as capitulation on the part of the Chalcedonians: the Byzantine chronicler, Theophanes, reports that the Monophysites boasted that 'it is not we who are accommodating to Chalcedon, rather Chalcedon is coming to us!'[20] In true Byzantine fashion (and following Heraclius' example in Syria and Mesopotamia), theological compromise was backed up by persecution, and it is as a persecutor that Cyrus is remembered in Coptic sources. In 633 Cyrus presided at a solemn Eucharist held in Alexandria at which many of the 'Theodosian' (the Egyptian equivalent of 'Jacobite') clergy were reconciled and the doctrinal agreement achieved solemnly read from the ambo by the Patriarch. This agreement, in nine chapters, survives, as it was cited at the sixth Ecumenical Council in 680/1: it is a classic and carefully-phrased statement of Monenergism, affirming the Cyrilline formula of 'one Incarnate nature of God the Word', theopaschism, and the assertion of a single 'theandric activity' in Christ, on the authority of Denys the Areopagite.

Up until 633 there seems to have been no opposition from any of those who accepted Chalcedon to the doctrine of Monenergism. But in 633, as Cyrus was celebrating his successful reconciliation of the Egyptian Monophysites, the aged monk Sophronius was in Alexandria. He read Cyrus' *Nine Chapters* and protested that they were heretical. Unable to prevent Cyrus from going ahead, Sophronius travelled to the imperial capital and made his protest to the Patriarch. Sergius respected the authority of the old monk and issued an 'authoritative statement', a *Psephos,* in which he forbade any language of 'one' or 'two' activities in Christ, and spoke simply of one Divine subject in Christ, which excludes there being two wills in Christ contrary to each other. The union in Alexandria was potentially of far-reaching importance, something that Sergius felt needed to be communicated to his brother-bishop in Rome, Pope Honorius. He had to report, however, that the terms of that union had provoked a protest from Sophronius, who had now left Constantinople and gone to his original homeland of Palestine, where he had been elected Patriarch of Jerusalem. In his letter to the Pope, Sergius stresses the immense significance of the union achieved in Alexandria, and expresses the

nature of the theological agreement achieved in terms drawn from the *Psephos,* with its uncontroversial assertion of the unity of Christ's divine subject, which excluded two contrary wills, and in fact made it unnecessary to count the 'activities' of Christ. In his reply, Honorius warmly congratulated those who had achieved such reconciliation in the East, and went on to clarify the nature of the theological agreement achieved, concluding with a confession of 'the one will of our Lord Jesus Christ': the refinement of Monenergism known as 'Monothelitism'. It was the doctrine of Monothelitism that was enshrined in the imperial edict, drafted by Sergius and signed by Heraclius in 638: the *Ecthesis.* In that same year Sergius died, to be succeeded by Pyrrhus, who, as abbot of the monastery of Chrysopolis, had helped in the drafting of the *Ecthesis.*

Elected Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, Sophronius, following custom, issued a *Synodical Letter* to be sent to the other patriarchs as evidence of his orthodoxy. Although this letter accepts the authority of the *Psephos* in so far as it does not literally 'count' the activities of Christ, it argues against Monenergism, as entailing Monophysitism. The *Ecthesis,* in fact, served as a response to Sophronius' *Synodical Letter* which Sergius refused to accept. In Rome, however, Sophronius seems to have found a more sympathetic ear: only fragments of the Pope's second letter to Sergius have survived, and it seems that there is a retreat from Monothelitism. Honorius died in 638, before he had a chance to accept or reject the *Ecthesis.* It was more than a year before his immediate successor, Severinus, was consecrated, owing to his resistance to accepting the *Ecthesis:* the brutal treatment he received from the imperial exarch was doubtless the reason why his reign in 640 lasted barely a few months. Popes John IV (640–2) and Theodore I (642–9) both rejected the *Ecthesis.*

But Heraclius' efforts to consolidate his reconquest of the Byzantine provinces in the Middle East were frustrated even as it seemed that he was succeeding. For, as we have already seen, in the course of the 630s and 640s both the Byzantine and the Persian Empires were shaken by an invasion from the south, from the deserts of Arabia. What lay behind this invasion from the south is shrouded in mystery. The conventional story is that many of the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian desert had found a militant unity under the new religion of Islam, preached by Muhammed, who died in 632. Be that as it may, one by one the cities of the Middle East fell to the Arab armies: Damascus in 635, Jerusalem in 638 (surrendered by the Patriarch Sophronius), the Persian Empire crumbled in the 640s, Alexandria was taken in 642 and despite several attempts the Byzantines were never able to regain it. In a very few years the Eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire were lost for good.

Heraclius died in 641. Many years before, Heraclius' first wife had died and he had taken the unpopular step of marrying his niece, Marina. In the dynastic struggle that followed Heraclius' death, Marina sought to secure power for herself and her son. She was unsuccessful, and in November 641 she and her son were banished, and Heraclius' grandson by his first marriage, Constans II, became Emperor. The Patriarch Pyrrhus had taken Marina's part and shared in her fall, being replaced by one Paul. Dynastic struggle and the catastrophic losses to the Arabs left the Byzantine throne insecure. There were rebellions in the years after Heraclius' death: in 646 the exarch of Carthage, Gregory, was proclaimed Emperor by his troops, but he was killed the next year, defending North Africa against the Arabs; in 652 the exarch of Italy, Olympius, died in Sicily where he had been plotting an alliance with the Arabs against Constans II.

MAXIMUS, THE CONFESSOR OF ORTHODOXY

The disgraced Pyrrhus eventually made his way to Carthage, perhaps hoping with the support of the powerful exarch of Carthage to regain the patriarchal throne. There he met Maximus who had been there for around fifteen years, a monk at the monastery Sophronius had established before his fateful departure for Alexandria in 633 and engagement in the new Christological controversy. Maximus and Pyrrhus seem to have known each other for some years by this time. In late 633 or early 634 Pyrrhus, then abbot of the monastery of Chrysopolis where Maximus began his monastic life (according to the Greek *Life),* had written to Maximus asking his opinion of Sergius' *Psephos:* Maximus had replied, endorsing the *Psephos* as undoing the heretical agreement reached at Alexandria in 633. In fact, during his time in North Africa, Maximus seems to have acquired a considerable theological reputation. Many of his mature writings are from this period, and most of them—as we shall see—are occasional in form, the response to requests for theological enlightenment. But it was not, it seems, until about 640 that Maximus came out openly against Monothelitism. In 645 a formal debate was held between Maximus and Pyrrhus under the auspices of the exarch, Gregory, in Carthage. This resulted in Pyrrhus' acceptance of orthodoxy. He departed for Rome, followed in 646 by Maximus. At Rome Pyrrhus was formally received into the orthodox confession by Pope Theodore. Maximus brought news of the condemnation of the *Ecthesis* by several North African councils. As a result, Pope Theodore formally broke off communion with Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople. On hearing the news of the death of the exarch Gregory in 647, Pyrrhus made his way to Ravenna where he made his peace with Monothelitism, having

abandoned the hope of being restored to the Patriarchal throne by Gregory and the anti-Monothelites. He was excommunicated by Pope Theodore, who signed the decree with a pen that had been dipped into a eucharistic chalice. The next year Constans II sought to close the whole debate by issuing an imperial decree, known as the *Typos,* which forbade 'any discussion of one will or one energy, two wills or two energies'.

Pope Theodore died before receiving the *Typos.* His successor, Martin I, instigated outright rebellion against the heretical imperial court. He sought confirmation of his election neither from the Emperor nor from his exarch in Ravenna. In October 649 he convened a council in the Lateran basilica to affirm orthodoxy against imperial heresy. One hundred and five bishops attended, mostly from Italy and Africa, though Stephen of Dora, a Palestinian bishop was there, who had earlier been sent to Rome as Sophronius' envoy. Maximus was also there, contributing his theological learning to the deliberations of the bishops. The council reaffirmed the doctrine of Chalcedon, and made explicit the doctrine of two energies and two wills in Christ, as the necessary entailment of the doctrine of the two natures. There was no personal condemnation of the Emperors Heraclius or Constans, but both the *Ecthesis* and the *Typos* were formally condemned, and a series of heretics anathematized: Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, and the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Sergius, Pyrrhus and Paul. In reaction the Emperor ordered the arrest of the Pope. Olympius the exarch went to Rome, where faced with popular opposition to his mission, he abandoned it, and—as we have seen—began to contemplate rebellion himself, until he died in Sicily in 652. The following year the new exarch, Theodore Kalliopas, arrested the sick Pope Martin. He was taken to Constantinople, where he was charged with treasonable complicity with Olympius. He was deposed, defrocked and illtreated, and exiled to Cherson in the Crimea, where he died on 16 September, 655, a confessor to Orthodoxy. Martin's immediate successors—Eugenius I and Vitalian—seem to have compromised: although neither of them formally accepted the *Typos,* both of them were in communion with the Monothelite Patriarch Peter, who had presided at the trial of Martin.

Resistance to Monothelitism was now virtually reduced to one man, the monk Maximus. He was arrested in Rome with two of his disciples and sent to Constantinople. At his first trial in 655, Maximus was first of all accused, like Martin, of treason, including support for the abortive rebellion by the exarch Gregory. Accusations then turned to theological matters, in which Maximus denied that any Emperor had the right to encroach on the rights of priesthood and define dogma. Maximus was exiled to Bizya in Thrace (modern Vize on the Turkish-

Bulgarian border). Further attempts followed to break his resolve. When they failed, Maximus was tried again in Constantinople, tortured, had his tongue and his right hand —the instruments with which he had defended Orthodoxy (or to his judges proclaimed heresy) —cut off, and exiled to Lazica, the homeland of Cyrus of Alexandria. He died there, over eighty years old, on 13 August 662. He died abandoned, except for his two disciples: there was no protest from Rome or anywhere else. His memory was, however, treasured in Georgia (to which the province of Lazica properly belongs). Within twenty years the teaching for which he had given his life—the doctrine that Christ had two wills, a divine will and a human will—was vindicated at the sixth Ecumenical Council, convened at Constantinople in 680, though no mention was made there of the great confessor of Orthodoxy, St Maximus.[21]

2
THE SOURCES OF MAXIMUS' THEOLOGY

Hans Urs von Balthasar prefaced his great study of the world-view of St Maximus the Confessor with a quotation from Coleridge:

> There is among us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank.[1]

It is important to heed Balthasar's warning, not because Maximus is completely original, but precisely because his originality is that of a mind that draws disparate things together in a profound and compelling way. But he certainly has sources, and many of his ideas can be traced back across the centuries, and not only across the Christian centuries, for Maximus knew a good deal of classical philosophy— in its later form that we dub 'Neoplatonism'—so that many of his ideas can be traced back to the great philosopher of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, Plato, and even earlier. But he lived in a civilization that valued tradition, that tended to think that history was a process of degeneration and decay, rather than of progress, so that consequently antiquity was a measure of truth. The ideal condition would be to remain the same; any change was likely to be corruption. But Paul Lemerle's oft-quoted warning that 'to represent Byzantium as immutable over a period of eleven centuries is to fall into a trap set by Byzantium itself'[2] applies to Byzantine theology, as much as to Byzantine political institutions. In both cases we need to accustom ourselves to recognize originality in the attempt to preserve an impression of permanence.

THE LITERARY FORMS OF HIS THEOLOGY

There are several manifestations of such conservatism in the theology of Maximus. First of all, perhaps, there are the very literary forms in which his theology is cast. He has two favoured forms. First, that of a collection of paragraphs (or chapters, as they are usually called, though they are normally quite short, sometimes no more than a sentence or two). They are arranged in groups of one hundred —a century, or in Greek, *hekatontas*—for instance, his four *Centuries on Love,* or his two *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnation.* The genre is monastic in origin, so far as the Christian tradition is concerned: the great monastic theorist of the fourth century, Evagrius, composed centuries, and there are later centuries from the fifth-century Bishop of Photikê, Diadochus, whose work influenced Maximus, John of Carpathos, who may have been Maximus' contemporary, Nicetas Stethatos, the eleventh-century disciple and biographer of St Symeon the New Theologian and many others.[3] The reason for this arrangement is twofold: first, practical, the brief chapters are intended to convey understanding of aspects of the monk's ascetic struggle (or of the Christian faith) in an arresting and assimilable fashion—they are to be read slowly and pondered, chapter by chapter; second, symbolic, for the number one hundred is a symbol of perfection or completeness (Evagrius provides a striking variant of this by compiling 'centuries' that either, as in his *Praktikos,* conclude with a collection of stories of the Desert Fathers, or, in his *Gnostic Centuries,* contain only ninety chapters: in both cases suggesting symbolically that theoretical instruction about the spiritual life cannot encompass it, let alone be complete). In these ways, the century is presented as a summary of traditional wisdom: in the case of centuries on the spiritual life, a wisdom reaching back to the Desert Fathers of fourth-century Egypt, and often based on the collections of their sayings and exploits, and beyond them to the great ascetics of the Scriptures, notably the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

The second literary form in which Maximus' theology is cast is that of responses to questions raised with him by others. Sometimes this reminds one of the classical tradition of *scholia:* comments, sometimes quite lengthy, on difficult passages—originally in the great epic poems of Homer. But this form also belongs—like the century, and perhaps more fundamentally—to the tradition of monastic catechesis, to the question-and-answer pattern that was followed in the instruction given by a spiritual father to his disciples. Some monastic treatises are cast directly in the form of questions and answers (the Greek term for this kind of work is *erôtapokriseis*): early examples can be found in the *Macarian Homilies* (e.g. nos. 12, 26 and 27 of the traditional

collection of Fifty), Maximus' *Ascetic Life* falls into this category. Some of Maximus' most important works show clearly their double heritage. They are like *scholia* in that they consist of comments on passages from the Scriptures (in the case of the *Questions to Thalassius),* or from the Fathers—principally St Gregory of Nazianzus—(the *Books of Difficulties),* or from both *(Quaestiones et dubia,* as its first editor called it, though it should probably be called 'Questions and Answers'), but that they fit into the pattern of monastic catechesis (or relate to it) is evident from the individuals to whom they are addressed, and the apparent occasions that prompted them: the first *Book of Difficulties* (*Amb.* 6–71), for instance, is addressed to John, Bishop of Cyzicus, and grew out of discussions that had taken place between the two men while Maximus was a monk at the monastery of St George in Cyzicus, as is clear from the prefatory letter.[4] Most of his other theological works are also in the form of responses to questions put to him: that applies to those of his letters that discuss theological or spiritual issues (the majority) and to his 'theological and polemic opuscula', that often take the form of letters. The few writings of Maximus that do not adopt these forms take the even more traditional form of commentary: his commentaries on Psalm 59 and the Lord's Prayer, and his commentary on the Eucharistic liturgy, his *Mystagogia.*

The form is important, for it makes clear that although Maximus the Confessor is a speculative theologian of genius, he does not see himself, as would some later theologians, as *constructing* a theological system. He sees himself as interpreting a tradition that has come down to him, and interpreting it for the sake of others. It is also striking, and I think significant, that broadly speaking he began by helping people (mainly monks, but not entirely: his second letter, a profound discussion of the nature of love, was addressed to a courtier, John the Cubicularius) to live a Christian life, it is only later that he concerns himself with speculative theological matters (though these are never detached from living a Christian life, apart from which they make no sense), and later still, and apparently with some reluctance, that he involved himself in theological controversy. Theological controversy was forced on him because theological error threatened the authenticity of a Christian life of love in response to God's love for us in the Incarnation: for that reason it mattered, and mattered to the point of death.

TRADITION

For Maximus the tradition that he sees himself as interpreting has several manifestations. One might sum it up as: Scripture, Fathers,

Councils, Saints, Sacraments. Scripture is absolutely primary. Maximus interprets it by analogy with the Incarnation: in it the Word of God draws near to human beings and Selects things which are familiar to them, combining together various stories, symbols, parables and dark sayings; and in this way He becomes flesh' (*CT* II. 60). Scripture is therefore the Word of God talking to human beings: it is our access to eternal truth. To understand it one needs to engage with the Word who speaks, enter into a relationship through which we are transformed and come to find the Word less strange, though not less awesome. The Church—all those incorporated into Christ through baptism—is where understanding of the Word takes place. The Fathers and the Saints are two categories (not separate, but distinct) of those who are being drawn into this process of understanding. To them Maximus attributes an authority scarcely less than that of the Scriptures. On several occasions (notably in the *Ascetic Life* and the *Mystagogia)* Maximus presents his teaching as something that he has learnt from an 'old man' *(gerôn,* the normal Greek term for a spiritual father): it is a way of clothing the teaching he has received in the mantle of a lived tradition, lived out in the ascetic struggle of the holy man or woman, or saint. In his *scholia* on passages from St Gregory of Nazianzus, whom he calls 'the Theologian', he seems to attribute to him virtual infallibility: Gregory is the 'great and wonderful teacher' and Maximus never, in dealing with the difficult passages in his sermons, entertains the idea that the Theologian might have made a mistake (even in *Amb*. 21, where Gregory refers to John the Evangelist as the 'Forerunner', the title of John the Baptist).[5] Tradition, witnessed to in Scripture and expounded by the Fathers, is there to be interpreted, not called in question. The councils of the Church—both local and Ecumenical— were also occasions on which the meaning of Tradition was authoritatively recognized, and acclaimed by the bishops gathered together in the Spirit.[6] Maximus does not all that often refer explicitly to the five Ecumenical Councils that by his time had already taken place. But he does something even more important: he makes the decisions of these councils a guide to the fundamental nature of reality and develops what we shall call a 'Chalcedonian logic' which he uses as a powerful tool of theological elucidation. As well as at councils, the bishops exercise their authority as Fathers of the Church in their sermons, in which they expound the meaning of the Scriptures, almost invariably in a liturgical context. The authority of the Saints is manifest in their success (or better: progress) in the ascetic struggle. Here lies the importance of monasticism for Maximus, not that sanctity is confined to a monastic élite, but sanctity is the goal of the ascetic struggle that monks have set themselves to pursue without distraction, just as sanctity is the

goal of any Christian's life. But sanctity is not simply a matter of ascetic struggle: it is a response to God's presence among us in the Incarnation, a presence that can be experienced through the Sacraments, pre-eminently the Eucharist. Hence the importance for Maximus of the Sacraments: they are also part of tradition, part of the continuing engagement with God, held out to us in the Scriptures. But they have another importance, too, as Maximus makes clear in his *Mystagogia:* for the ascetic struggle involved in responding to God is not simply an individual matter, it is part of the process of overcoming the divisions that have shattered the cosmos as a result of the Fall—ascetic struggle has cosmic significance and this is made manifest in the drama of the liturgy.

THE ASCETIC TRADITION

Something of what one might call the texture of tradition is becoming apparent from all this. It will be useful to identify some of the threads and colours of the pattern. Perhaps most fundamental is the ascetic tradition into which Maximus had been initiated from the time he sought the monastic habit. This was a tradition that the monks themselves traced back to John the Baptist, and to the great figures of the Old Testament—the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and beyond them, Moses and the patriarchs. But more immediately it went back to the Desert Fathers, the great figures of the fourth-century growth of Christian monasticism in the years after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine and the growing acceptability of the Church in Mediterranean society. The collections of stories about the Desert Fathers were primary reading in the monasteries.[7] Some of the collections are arranged according to the names of the monastic figures involved, alphabetically.[8] Others are arranged systematically, in accordance with the lessons to be learnt from these stories (and especially the sayings recorded). In these systematic collections there can be discerned a structured understanding of the stages of the spiritual life, and the principal architect of this theory of the spiritual life was Evagrius. Maximus owed a great deal to the spirituality of Evagrius,[9] who had lived in the fourth century, and eventually made his way to the Egyptian desert where he spent the last fifteen years of his life until his death in 399. He was a controversial figure: he sought to interpret the spiritual life in categories (of largely Platonic inspiration) derived from the 'Christian Platonists of Alexandria', Clement (who had taught there at the end of the second century) and Origen (who had taught, first at Alexandria, later at Caesarea in Palestine, in the first half of the third century). This provoked the so-called 'Origenist' controversy (although in many respects Clement was

a more important influence on Evagrius) at the turn of the fourth/fifth centuries.[10] All sorts of issues were involved—Evagrius' understanding that in prayer we can eventually attain a state of pure contemplation in which we dispense with images (why then the Incarnation? some wondered); his conviction that the goal of the ascetic struggle is a state he called *apatheia* (often translated, and misunderstood, as passionlessness: it really means a state of serenity); the idea he shared with Origen that the cosmos has been brought into being as a result of the Fall from a state of original contemplative unity, and is itself an environment through which we are directed back to God in an inexorable process that will finally lead to the restoration of all things *(apokatastasis pantôn);* linked to this the idea that we can attain equality with Christ, become *isochristoi.* Evagrius was condemned at local synods after his death, but this did not stop his influence in monastic circles. The principal reason for this is that Evagrius' ascetical wisdom, which is what the bulk of his writing was concerned with, was so highly valued. His works circulated under pseudonyms and remained influential. But enthusiasm for his ascetical teaching often led to the more questionable metaphysic that lay behind it, and 'Origenism' (meaning 'Evagrianism') remained current in monastic circles.[11] It was condemned in an edict issued by the Emperor Justinian in 543,[12] and Origen himself was condemned in general terms at the fifth Ecumenical Council in 553,[13] but still Origenism retained its appeal. Part of the achievement of Maximus was to retain the ascetical wisdom of Evagrianism while sifting out the more questionable metaphysics, or metaphysic of the soul and the cosmos to replace it. Concern with Origenism runs through the first *Book of Difficulties,* which has been called (especially with reference to *Amb.* 7) 'a refutation of Origenism…with a full understanding and will to retain what is good in the Alexandrian's doctrine—a refutation perhaps unique in Greek patristic literature'.[14]

But the ascetic tradition that Maximus inherited is not exausted by Evagrius. He is also indebted to the very different tradition found in the Macarian Homilies. In contrast to the intellectualist tradition of Evagrius (both in the sense of making the intellect—Greek *nous*— the core of the human person, and in the sense of being learned and speculative), the tradition found in the Macarian Homilies lays stress on experience and regards prayer as an activity of the heart. There is no doubt that the Macarian Homilies have their background in a movement called Messalianism that in its extreme forms saw in prayer the exclusive activity of the Christian life—exclusive of the Sacraments, and even perhaps of morality. There is equally no doubt, that the doctrine of the Macarian Homilies shaves Messalianism of

explicitly heretical tendencies.[15] 'Messalianism' was condemned, at various local councils in the fourth century, and at the third Ecumenical Council in 431, and later, but—like Evagrianism— it retained its popularity among certain sections of monasticism. Maximus' debt to the Macarian Homilies is sometimes direct and literary: there is an allusion to the Macarian metaphor of the 'earth of the heart' at the beginning of *Opusc.* 7.[16] But perhaps Macarian influence is most deeply felt in the importance that Maximus attaches to experience *(peira)*. Knowledge of God is, for Maximus, a transforming experience, which is why he lays such stress on deification as the goal of the human life.[17] He does not, however, claim such experience for himself, and in fact on several occasions explicitly disclaims any experience that would qualify him to be a teacher of others.[18] Rather he appeals to the experience of others, especially the 'old man' to whom he frequently defers.[19]

There is a further tributary to the ascetic tradition that influenced Maximus and that is the doctrine of Diadochus, the mid-fifth century Bishop of Photikê in Epiros. It is possible that Maximus came to know of Diadochus' writings in Carthage, for it has been argued that Diadochus may have been taken back to Carthage as a prisoner after a Vandal raid on Epiros between 467 and 474 (a Bishop of Carthage of the later fifth century—probably Eugenius, Bishop from 481 to 505—is said to have been a disciple of Diadochus), and his renown may have lived on in Christian circles there.[20] According to Hausherr, Maximus had 'studied Diadochus attentively' (Hausherr 1952, 42). He actually cites him at least twice, once with great respect in the *Dialogue with Pyrrhus,*[21] and several scholars have detected further borrowings from Diadochus.[22] But Maximus' affinity with Diadochus may be deeper than the mere borrowing of texts. For Diadochus is important as an early example of an attempt to fuse together the analysis of human nature that lies at the heart of Evagrius' ascetical wisdom and the emphasis on transforming experience perceived by the heart that we find in the Macarian Homilies.[23] Precisely the same fusion can be found in Maximus, and it is here, I would argue, that we find the deepest affinity between the Confessor and the Bishop of Photikê.

THE DOGMATIC TRADITION

The ascetic tradition was basic to Maximus, for the fundamental interpretation of the tradition handed down in the Church is to be found in the way it informs, and transforms, the lives of individuals and thus contributes to the restoration of the fractured cosmos. But even more fundamental in the restoration of the cosmos than ascetic

struggle is the reconciling power of the love of God—the love of God that is the eternal life of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that is manifest and reaches out to us in the assumption of a human life by the Son in the Incarnation. This was beyond human understanding, but not beyond human misunderstanding: and it was to protect against human misunderstanding of what the Fathers called theology (meaning the doctrine of the Trinity) and 'economy' (meaning God's dealing with humankind—pre-eminently in the Incarnation, but including creation and revelation through Scripture and reconciling activity in the Sacraments) that what we call the 'theological tradition' had been developed by the Fathers and the Councils.

The theological tradition that Maximus had received and sought to interpret faithfully—and which, in the Monothelite controversy, he played a decisive role in forming—was composed of several strands. The most obvious—because so many of Maximus' *scholia* directly deal with passages from their writings—is the Cappadocian tradition, that is the theological doctrine of the three fourth-century bishops from Cappadocia—Basil of Caesarea, Basil's long-standing friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (though this was the episcopal see of his father: he was Bishop of, successively, Sasima and briefly Constantinople), and Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa. It may be an oversimplification to speak of the 'Cappadocian Fathers' (it is a modern habit), but for Maximus what it means overwhelmingly is the teaching of St Gregory of Nazianzus, 'the Theologian'.[24] The evidence of his engagement with the Theologian is mainly found in his *Difficulties*. On the face of it, this is ambiguous evidence for Gregory's positive influence on Maximus: it is more directly evidence of the difficulty Maximus found in interpreting him. What kind of difficulties Maximus faced is too complex a question to go into here.[25] But some of the more theological problems he had with Gregory can be stated simply. Part of Maximus' problem with Gregory was the problem of 'Origenism'. Gregory, like many fourth-century theologians, had been deeply influenced by Origen: in their youth, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen had compiled a *florilegium* from Origen's works, called the *Philokalia*. It was precisely because of his authority as 'the Theologian' that Gregory was a favourite author among those monks inclined to Origenism. Other problems had to do with his Christology: that we shall come to soon. But the Cappadocian Fathers—or Gregory—did provide answers as well as problems, not least their clarification of the ontological language (language concerning being) to be used in relation to God: they thus contributed towards the 'Chalcedonian logic' that Maximus brought to perfection. But Maximus was also indebted to the youngest Cappadocian Father, St Gregory of Nyssa. This Gregory was probably the most brilliant speculative thinker of the

Cappadocian Fathers, and for this reason has attracted more attention, perhaps, than any of them from recent scholars. It seems to have been Gregory's metaphysical genius that attracted Maximus. They both share—with a clarity of exposition that distinguishes them from many others in the Greek patristic tradition—the doctrine of the double creation of the human person: a first creation that transcends sexual difference, and a second creation marked by sexual duality. They both work through an understanding of the wholeness of the human person, in which soul and body are mutually complementary. Maximus also seems to have been indebted to Gregory in his treatment of the theme of the divisions of being.[26]

Another strand in the theological tradition Maximus is heir to is less explicit than that represented by the Cappadocian Fathers, but much more fundamental, and that is the Alexandrian Christological tradition of Athanasius and Cyril. He is heir to this principally because this was the dominant tradition in Byzantine theology from the sixth century onwards. It is important to realize how much he took for granted the Cyrilline Chalcedonianism he inherited: his opposition to Monothelitism is worked out *within* this tradition, not as a criticism of that tradition. He is wholly committed to the Alexandrian understanding of the Incarnation as the Son of God's assuming a human nature and living a human life, with its corollary in the validity of theopaschite language. This comes out in two of the 'later' *Difficulties* (though several years earlier than Maximus' involvement in the Monothelite controversy). These are *Amb.* 2 and 4 (neither of them translated here), which also bring out the difficulty Maximus had with Gregory's Christological language. *Amb.* 2 is concerned with a passage from Gregory's Third Theological Oration in which he counters the Arian argument that one who is God cannot be said to hunger, sleep or fear, all of which are attributed to Christ, by saying: 'And, in a word, what is exalted is to be ascribed to the Godhead, to that nature which is superior to sufferings and the body, what is lowly is to be ascribed to the composite that for your sake emptied himself and took flesh and—it is no worse to say—became a man.' The reason why this poses a difficulty for Maximus is the way in which it seems to keep suffering away from the Godhead and thus possibly compromise the unity of Christ's person (though Gregory's language here is in fact very careful). Maximus' response is a paraphrase of Gregory that emphasizes the unity of subject in Christ and, in particular, expressly justifies theopaschite language by using, and repeating, an expression from Gregory's Fourth Theological Oration—'God passible'. The same concern is found in *Amb.* 4 where he says, 'therefore he was also truly a suffering God, and the very same was truly a wonder-working man, because also there was a true hypostasis of true natures according to

an ineffable union' (1045A). Maximus' defence of two wills in the Incarnate Christ is not intended to suggest that there are two subjects in Christ, but to safeguard the full humanity in which the Second Person of the Godhead lives out a human life.

A TRADITION OF COSMIC THEOLOGY: DENYS THE AREOPAGITE

A final strand in Maximus' theological heritage is more controversial. This is the influence on him of the works ascribed to Denys (or Dionysius) the Areopagite. These writings came to the notice of Christian thinkers barely fifty years before Maximus' birth. They are first quoted (or misquoted) by the Cyrilline theologians who rejected Chalcedon (the 'Acephaloi' or Severan Monophysites) at the colloquy called by Justinian in his attempts to achieve a settlement of the Christological controversy in 532. They cited in their support a passage from one of the writings ascribed to the Areopagite where he refers to Christ's 'one theandric energy'—arguing that if it is legitimate to speak of one energy in Christ, it is legitimate to speak of a single nature. The Orthodox dismissed the authority of the 'Areopagite', retorting that none of the Fathers—not Cyril, not Athanasius—had ever heard of him. But the compelling vision of the Areopagite was such that very soon his works were accepted by Monophysite and Orthodox alike as authentic: that is, as genuine works of that Denys, an Athenian who had been one of the judges of the Apostle Paul when he defended his preaching of Christianity before the court of the Areopagus in about AD 52 (see Acts 17.22–34), and who, it was believed, had become one of the early bishops of Athens. In fact, it is now universally recognized that these works—the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* the *Divine Names,* the *Mystical Theology,* and some letters—were written at the end of the fifth, or beginning of the sixth, century, probably by a Syrian monk, who had conceived an enthusiasm for the brand of Neoplatonism we associate with the fifth-century 'Platonic successor' *(diadochus)* at the Academy in Athens called Proclus (probably through having read some of their works, rather than having actually been a pupil at the Academy).[27] These works were edited in the middle of the sixth century by John, Bishop of Scythopolis in Palestine (modern Bet Shean), an orthodox Cyrilline Chalcedonian, and all the manuscripts of Denys that we have, except for the early Syriac translation by Sergius of Reshaina, go back to John's edition.[28] John was a man of enormous erudition: he provided a preface to the *Corpus Areopagiticum* and learned *scholia* to the individual works. Part of his purpose in this was to show that Denys really belonged to the

Orthodox, rather than to the Monophysites. It was Denys as presented by John that Maximus knew and accepted as part of the theological tradition. What Denys did for the tradition of Byzantine theology can perhaps be summed up under three headings: philosophy, liturgy, cosmos.

So far as philosophy is concerned, Denys introduced into the tradition of Byzantine theology many of the categories, and much of the terminology, of Neoplatonism. This was not difficult to do, for already several of the Fathers of the Greek tradition had made use of Platonic (and sometimes Neoplatonic) concepts. Cyril of Alexandria, for instance, had drawn on Neoplatonic logic for terminology in which to express his understanding of the unity of Christ.[29] Plato's idea, expressed in his *Timaeus,* that the human being is a microcosm—a small replica of the cosmos—had found widespread acceptance among Christian thinkers. The idea, also fundamental for Plato, that contemplation is the highest and proper activity of the human mind, was also widely accepted, and had already made itself at home in much Christian understanding of the life of prayer. Denys took this further, and introduced the Neoplatonic terminology of apophatic and cataphatic (negative and affirmative) theology for a distinction already familiar to Christian theology. He took over as well the Neoplatonic fascination with triads (not at all unwelcome to Trinitarian Christians), finding a triadic structure throughout the cosmos and the Christian liturgy, and introducing the triadic rhythm of purification, illumination, and union (or perfection) to attempts to understand the transforming action of divine grace. He also introduced —or gave wider currency to—philosophical terminology such as being-potentiality-activity (or being-power-energy) and being-well being-eternal being, and developed along Neoplatonic lines the doctrine of providence *(pronoia).*

Denys' treatise, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* is entirely concerned with aspects of the Christian liturgy. He discusses the Sacrament of Initiation (for which he uses the traditional term, enlightenment), the Eucharist (which he calls the 'gathering together', *synaxis),* the Sacrament of consecrated oil *(myron),* the ceremonies of ordination to the episcopate, priesthood and diaconate, the ceremony of monastic consecration, and the service of Christian burial. Through this discussion of the Christian liturgy and the hierarchical community that celebrates it, he discloses the operation of the all-embracing love of God, that is witnessed to in the events recorded in the Scriptures and especially in the Incarnation, and draws us closer to God through our participation in the liturgy. In this movement—both liturgical and ascetic—of drawing near to and disclosing the glory of God, he discerns a fundamental rhythm of purification, illumination and

union, and also sees a circular movement of procession, return and rest in the ultimate that is of clear Neoplatonic inspiration. He also applies to the liturgy the Neoplatonic language of theurgy, and in doing so transforms it.[30]

But perhaps the most compelling aspect of Denys' vision is his understanding of the cosmos. He sees it as a hierarchy, or hierarchy of hierarchies. The word, hierarchy, is Denys' own coinage and it is important to realize what he meant by it. It has come to mean nowadays a rigid order of graded subordination. But in his *Celestial Hierarchy*, Denys defined it quite differently:

> In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine… The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him… Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendour they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale. (3.1f.:164D–165A)[31]

What Denys means by hierarchy, then, is a radiant display that reaches out from God throughout the whole of the created order and draws it back into union with him. Whereas the modern understanding of hierarchy stresses separation and exclusion, for Denys it connotes inclusion and union.[32] He sees the cosmos, not in traditional classical terms as the spheres of the planets, the sun and the moon, and beyond them the fixed sphere of the stars—for him, as for most Christians, lifeless beings—but as rank on rank of angelic beings, praising God and radiating his glory, and drawing human beings up into praise of God and the transforming power of his glory. This gives Christian worship, and the Christian message, a cosmic dimension. Just as the Greek Fathers see the Fall of man in ontological terms—the letting-loose of corruption and death driving the whole created order towards non-being—so they see the coming of the reconciling Christ and our attempts to respond to, and live out, that reconciliation in our lives as of cosmic significance. The Dionysian vision of the cosmos provides a metaphysical context in which the cosmic significance of the Christian Gospel can be made clear.

Maximus is heir to all this: but, more than that, in his own theological reflection he works out in greater—and more practical—detail what in Denys is often not much more than splendid and inspiring rhetoric. How the cosmos has been fractured, and how it is

healed—how this is achieved in the liturgy—what contribution the Christian ascetic struggle has to make: all this can be found, drawn together into an inspiring vision, in the work of the Confessor. It seems to me that Denys provides the cosmic framework for Maximus' vision.[33] Into this framework there fits the wisdom of the ascetic tradition, with its understanding of human nature, and his deepened understanding of the Incarnation in which the creaturely will is united in full integrity to the will of the Creator. The ascetic tradition and the dogmatic tradition cross-fertilize, notably in the way the ascetic tradition fills out an understanding of the modalities of that human nature assumed by the Son of God. In this synthesis there is much genuine originality, which often takes the form of linking together traditional notions in a profoundly illuminating way, a good instance of this being Maximus' application of the Dionysian language of apophatic and cataphatic theology, not simply to our understanding of God, as in Denys, but directly to the Incarnation and the doctrine of the two natures in a single person.[34] It is this brilliant theological synthesis that we shall explore in the rest of this Introduction.

3
MAXIMUS' SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

We have already seen that, so far as his writings go, Maximus seems to have begun by addressing himself to matters of spiritual or ascetical theology. Before his arrival in Africa, round about 630, few of his writings raise questions of dogmatic or philosophical theology, though if it is indeed the case, as has been conjectured, that on his way from Asia Minor to Africa he engaged in disputation with Severan Monophysites in Crete, it would seem that he already had a reputation as a defender of Orthodoxy. I have already argued that it is probably not fortuitous that his concerns were initially ascetic. It is, it seems to me, of a piece with the way in which his theological writings are essentially occasional, the response to requests for elucidation on the part of his friends. He early acquired a reputation as a spiritual father (though it seems that he never became an abbot, still less a priest), and it was out of that relationship that he began to write both letters and short treatises many of which follow closely the forms of monastic catechesis.

A THEOLOGICAL ASCESIS

But from the beginning his ascetical theology is firmly set against a theological background: ascetical theology is about how we come to know God, it is not about some kind of spiritual technique; to come to know God is a matter of experience, not speculation; for a Christian to come to know God is to respond to a God who has made himself known. This is where Maximus begins. Early on in his short treatise on the Lord's Prayer (written before 630) we read:

> The Logos bestows adoption on us when He grants us that birth and deification which, transcending nature, comes by grace from above through the Spirit. The guarding and preservation of this in God depends on the resolve of those thus born: on their sincere acceptance of the grace bestowed on them and, through

the practice of the commandments, on their cultivation of the beauty given to them by grace. Moreover, by emptying themselves of the passions they lay hold of the divine to the same degree as that to which, deliberately emptying Himself of His own sublime glory, the Logos of God truly became man.[1]

This paragraph takes for granted the doctrine of the Trinity (which the preceding paragraph spells out quite explicitly), the doctrine of the Incarnation, and our adoption as children of God through Christ in the Spirit. But there are other themes more specifically characteristic of Maximus: the goal is deification, which is seen as the consequence (and purpose) of the Incarnation; and as the Incarnation of the Son involved his self-emptying *(kenosis),* so our deification involves our *kenosis,* the self-emptying of the passions. The way up is the way down: the *kenosis* of the Son demands the *kenosis* of the adopted sons; the manifestation of the One 'more beautiful than the sons of men'[2] calls for the 'cultivation of the beauty given to them by grace', through their acceptance of the grace offered and the practice of the commandments.

For Maximus, the themes of dogmatic theology provide an outline that is filled in by his ascetical theology, that is, his theology of the Christian life: the manifestation of God's glory prefigures our glorification, the Son's self-emptying foreshadows our self-emptying—in short, God the Word's becoming human opens up the possibility of human beings becoming God. This is not peculiar to Maximus—it is, in fact, a characteristic theme of much patristic theology—but Maximus fills in the details much more thoroughly than many of the earlier Fathers. He does this by drawing on the developed ascetical theology of Byzantine monasticism, that stretches back to the Desert Fathers, and beyond, and owes much of its systematic form to Evagrius. The quotation from his commentary on the Lord's Prayer already includes a few of the technical terms of this ascetical theology —'passions', especially, and also the language of deification. If we look further afield in Maximus' writings we shall find the whole range of such terminology drawn on to explore what is involved in responding to the Word's seeking us out in his Incarnation.

ASCETICISM FOR ALL

Perhaps the first point to make clear is that Maximus' ascetical theology in principle applies to all Christians. Although most of the writings that developed this ascetical theology in the Byzantine world were for monks and by monks (and Maximus himself was a monk),

what is being discussed is something that takes place in the life of any Christian who strives to be faithful to his baptism (we have already noticed that one of his profoundest spiritual treatises, his second letter, translated below, was written for a courtier). Maximus himself often makes explicit that the Christian life is something that has its foundation in baptism (something not always emphasized by other monastic writers, for instance Evagrius himself). So he says in his first *Century on Theology and the Incarnation:* 'Baptized in Christ through the Spirit we receive the first incorruption according to the flesh. Keeping this original incorruption spotless by giving ourselves to good works and by dying to our own will, we await the final incorruption bestowed by Christ in the Spirit' (*CT* I.87). What is built on the foundation laid by baptism is something worked out by Maximus using all the resources of ascetical theology available to him. (In this emphasis on baptism he reveals his affinity with Diadochus of Photikê.)

THE INFLUENCE OF EVAGRIUS

What were these resources? Principally the works of Evagrius and those who followed him. There Maximus found a pattern for the stages of the spiritual life. For Evagrius sees the Christian life as passing through three stages. First there is the stage he calls *praktikê,* the term that classical philosophers had coined for the active life of engagement in the world in contrast to *theôrêtikê,* used to designate a life of intellectual activity (contemplation). *Praktikê,* however, for Evagrius does not mean life in the world, rather it refers to the initial stage of the spiritual life which is characterized by effort or activity, the effort of striving to follow the commandments and cultivate virtues, and of struggling against temptation—in the translations that follow, I have usually translated it 'ascetic struggle'. Evagrius has a great deal to say about this stage of *praktikê*: it has, indeed, been remarked that Evagrius' ability is especially 'in the field of practical piety'.[3] It is what Evagrius has to say *on praktikê* that was preserved in the original Greek (his more daring speculations survive only in Syriac), and it is on this that Maximus drew most heavily (though he was well aware of Evagrius' speculative theology, and in his writings attempts to provide a metaphysical background to his ascetic theology more consonant with Christian orthodoxy).[4] The stage of *praktikê* is followed by that of natural contemplation (*physikê,* the Greek for 'natural'): this is the beginning of contemplation, in which the purified mind is able to contemplate the natural order and understand its inner structure. This is followed by the final stage, that of theology, understood in the usual patristic sense, not as some

kind of academic study, but as knowledge or contemplation of God, a knowledge which is transforming, so that the mind becomes God, or is deified.

The aim of ascetic struggle for Evagrius is to purify the mind and prepare it for prayer. More specifically, ascetic struggle leads to a state of *apatheia,* a key term in Byzantine ascetical theology, usually misunderstood in the West (from at least the time of Jerome).[5] Literally, it means 'passionlessness'; it is often translated 'dispassion' (which is what I have adopted), but is best understood as a state of serenity. But ascetic struggle is understood as struggle with the passions, with moods or desires that come upon us, often obsessively, and disturb or distract us. Evagrius uses another word to describe the passions, and that is *logismos,* a thought, but as it is more like a train of thoughts set in motion by one or more of the passions, I have usually translated *logismos* by 'train of thought'. Evagrius also speaks in this context of demons: it is the demons who stir up the trains of thought connected with the passions. According to Evagrius, there are eight *logismoi,* corresponding to the passions of gluttony, fornication, avarice, grief, anger, accidie or listlessness, vainglory and pride.[6] Like most of the Fathers he works with the kind of tripartition of the soul that can be traced back to Plato, the three parts being the rational part (the mind [*nous*], the pilot of the soul) and two irrational parts—the incensive part (to use the translation adopted here), the source of the soul's energy, and the desiring part. This tripartition is used in his analysis of the ways in which the passions affect the soul: gluttony, fornication and avarice are passions that affect the desiring part of the soul, they are disordered desires; grief and anger affect the incensive part; vainglory and pride affect the rational part of the soul; accidie affects all three parts. The point of this analysis is diagnostic: if one understands what kind of passion one is suffering from, then one can begin to learn how to deal with it. The remedies are manifold, and often conveyed in stories (the collections of sayings of the Fathers of the Desert are largely concerned with shedding light on the stage of ascetic struggle): monastic discussion of these (not least what we find in Evagrius) manifests considerable psychological subtlety, and also an awareness of the huge variety of human types, that all need different treatment. Once freed from the passions, the mind can engage in prayer or contemplation, undistracted by the passions: the 'flower' of ascetic struggle, Evagrius says, is *apatheia*.[7] Once the soul has attained *apatheia,* it can begin to contemplate. This leads the soul to the second stage, that of natural contemplation. Natural contemplation is so called because at this stage the mind is able to contemplate the *logoi* that lie behind the natural order. In Christian usage, this notion of the *logoi* can be traced back to Origen: they are

the principles in accordance with which everything in the cosmos was created through the Word of God, the *Logos*. In the fallen world they are no longer clear to us: we tend not to see *God's* meaning in the world and all its parts, rather we tend to see the world in relation to ourselves and read into it *our* meaning. As a result the world becomes an arena for human conflict, for we all see it differently, in a way that is focused on separated selves. To see the *logoi* of the natural order is to see it as it is and to be freed from our private prejudices, which are rooted in the disorder created in our hearts by the passions. It is also to understand the providence and judgment of God, as Evagrius puts it, that is to understand how God has constituted the cosmos as a kind of arena in which fallen souls learn how to turn back their attention to God. In this state of natural contemplation the mind begins to 'see its own radiance',[8] begins to be aware of its own contemplative powers. From this point on, the soul can progress to the final stage of contemplation of God, of *theologia*. This is the realm of prayer, which Evagrius regards as a state rather than an activity, not so much something you do as something you are. In this state the soul recovers its true nature: 'the state of prayer is an impassible habit which snatches up the soul that loves wisdom to the intellectual heights by a most sublime love'.[9]

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVAGRIUS

Such, very roughly sketched, is the Evagrian pattern to which Maximus is deeply indebted. But it is not present in Maximus' writings unchanged. To begin with, behind Evagrius' teaching on prayer and ascetic struggle there lay his 'Origenist' metaphysic, with which Maximus profoundly disagreed, and of which he was its greatest critic. But he was a critic with great sympathy for what he criticized, and extremely anxious not to throw out the baby with the bath-water. At the level of ascetic theology, Maximus is able to preserve most of what Evagrius taught, and he does. But he thinks it through again, and though many of the concepts and terms he uses are clearly Evagrian, what is expressed is no less distinctively Maximian. Thinking it through again partly means weaving into the Evagrian material themes from other traditions, especially that which stems from Denys the Areopagite, but also themes from the Macarian Homilies and from Diadochus of Photikê. But more deeply still, Maximus' rethinking of Evagrian categories is manifest in the somewhat different spirit that emerges as he develops his ascetic theology.

THE WAY OF LOVE[10]

As his second letter, one of the earliest of his writings, makes clear, for Maximus, training in Christianity is a training in love (for which Maximus usually uses the word *agapê,* but sometimes the word *erôs:* I do not think we should make any great issue over his use of these words).[11] His first *Century on Love* begins:

> Love is a holy disposition of the soul, in accordance with which it values knowledge of God above all created things. We cannot attain lasting possession of such love while we are still attached to anything worldly.
>
> Dispassion engenders love, hope in God engenders dispassion, and patience and forbearance engender hope in God; these in turn are the product of complete self-control, which itself springs from fear of God. Fear of God is the result of faith in God.
>
> (*CC* I.1–2)

Similarly, when at the beginning of the next century on love, he comes to talk about pure prayer, he defines this in terms of love: 'he who truly loves God prays entirely without distraction, and he who prays entirely without distraction loves God truly' (*CC* II.1). Whereas Evagrius' doctrine of prayer and the spiritual life is about how the soul is to regain the state of being pure mind from which it has fallen, for Maximus the spiritual life is about how we love. In our fallen state, apart from the call of God, we are in a state of self-love, *philautia.* It is from this condition that all the passions flow: Maximus calls it the 'mother of passions'.[12]

Love is about how we relate—to God, to other people (and, indeed, to ourselves): Maximus defines it as an 'inward relationship' of the utmost universality (*Ep.* 2:401D). Instead of regarding the passions simply as registering the state of the soul, Maximus sees the passions as affecting our relationships with other people, and indeed as being provoked by such relationships. So, though he makes much use of Evagrius' eight principal passions, he also gives a prominent place to other passions that Evagrius ignores (or subsumes under the others), especially passions such as resentment (or rancour) and envy, that are essentially about our relationships with others. So we find Maximus saying:

> If you harbour resentment against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your grief from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and

> compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his passion.
>
> (*CC* III.90)

Similarly on envy we find Maximus saying:

> As for your own envy, you will be able to check it if you rejoice with the man whom you envy whenever he rejoices, and grieve whenever he grieves, thus fulfilling St Paul's words, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep' (Rom. 12:15).
>
> (*CC* III.91)[13]

It is not surprising then to discover that for Maximus, love of the brothers *(Philadelphia)* is an important sign that we are beginning to free ourselves from self-love,[14] and that the acid test of the purity of our love is love of our enemies:

> 'But I say to you,' says the Lord, 'love your enemies…do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you' (Matt. 5:44). Why did he command this? To free you from hatred, grief, anger and resentment, and to make you worthy of the supreme gift of perfect love. And you cannot attain such love if you do not imitate God and love all men equally. For God loves all men equally and wishes them 'to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4).
>
> (*CC* I.61)

But such love is only possible if we free ourselves from the passions: without detachment we are not truly free.

'THE BLESSED PASSION OF HOLY LOVE'

The way in which Maximus' conception of the Christian life is ruled by his overriding concern with the quality of our love comes out in other ways. Ascetical theology can very easily seem negative: it is about cutting off the passions, separation from the world. Maximus does not play down this negative side, but he supplements it with a positive emphasis on the importance of deeper and purer love. 'A pure soul is one freed from the passions'—there is the negative emphasis, but there follows—'and constantly delighted by divine love' (*CC* I.34). He goes further and frequently emphasizes the danger of not only a purely negative detachment, but also of a purely intellectual

attachment to the truth. 'Just as the thought of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not actualize the light of spiritual knowledge in the soul' (*CC* I.31). He warns that 'unless the intellect finds something more noble to which it may transfer its desire, it will not be persuaded to scorn [earthly things] completely' (*CC* III.64). Simply to free oneself from the passions will lead to no lasting good:

> passion-free knowledge of divine things does not persuade the intellect to scorn material things completely; it is like the passion-free thought of a sensible thing. It is therefore possible to find many men who have much knowledge and yet wallow in the passions of the flesh like pigs in the mire. Through their diligence they temporarily cleanse themselves and attain knowledge, but then they grow negligent.
>
> (*CC* III.66)

What is required, Maximus insists, is a love for God more powerful than any love we may have for earthly things:

> just as passion-free thought of human things does not compel the intellect to scorn divine things, so passion-free knowledge of divine things does not fully persuade it to scorn human things. For in this world truth exists in shadows and conjectures; that is why there is need for the blessed passion of holy love, which binds the intellect to spiritual contemplation and persuades it to prefer what is immaterial to what is material, and what is intelligible and divine to what is apprehended by the senses.
>
> (*CC* III.67)

'The blessed passion of holy love': this is an odd phrase, since, as we have seen, in the Byzantine ascetic tradition, 'passion' nearly always indicates something evil (it is often, even in Maximus, more or less the equivalent of 'vice').[15] More starkly still, we have already learnt from Maximus that 'dispassion engenders love' (*CC* I.2). If we look closely at what Maximus has to say about *apatheia,* dispassion, we shall find that he is aware of the danger of an *apatheia* that is merely disinterestedness: *apatheia* must be a purified love. He seeks to prevent misunderstanding here with his very definition of passion: 'passion is an impulse of the soul *contrary to nature*' (*CC* II.16; my italics: cf. ibid. I.35). The passions to be expelled are those that are contrary to nature: there are natural passions that are perfectly proper. *Apatheia,* then, is the restoration of what is natural (that is, what is in accordance with unfallen nature). But Maximus goes further than this. For him, detachment from the irrational parts of the soul is the

aim of ascetic struggle, but only so that, in their purified state, they can be reincorporated in the whole human being, itself consumed by a passionate love for God. It is not so much detachment, as sublimation:

> When the human intellect is constantly with God, the desire grows beyond all measure into an intense longing for God and the incensiveness is completely transformed into divine love. For by continual participation in the divine radiance his intellect becomes totally filled with light; and when it has reintegrated its passible aspect, it redirects this aspect towards God, as we have said, filling it with an incomprehensible and intense longing for Him and with unceasing love, thus drawing it entirely away from worldly things to the divine.
>
> (*CC* II.48)

The irrational parts of the soul are not cut off, when the intellect is with God, rather they are sublimated: desire into divine *erôs* and the incensive part into divine *agapê.* In this treatment of *apatheia,* which distinguishes it utterly from any form of indifference, and sees it as a state embracing the lower parts of the soul, we again detect an affinity with Diadochus of Photikê who uses the arresting imagery of the 'fire of *apatheia*'.[16]

THEOLOGY AND CONTEMPLATION

There is a similar radical rethinking of Evagrian material in Maximus' understanding of the experience of the intellect in its transition from the state of natural contemplation that to *tbeologia,* contemplation of God Himself. Both Maximus and Evagrius use the notion of 'mere thoughts' *(psila noêmata)* to elucidate what is involved. But though they use the same term, they use it in almost completely different ways. For Evagrius 'mere thoughts' are what we strive to escape from, whereas for Maximus they are the sign of the beginnings of natural contemplation. This is, I think, because for Evagrius the passage from natural contemplation to *theologia* is defined almost entirely in terms of a growing simplification: mere thoughts (that is, thoughts uncorrupted by passion) are the product of *apatheia,* and characteristic of the stage of contemplation. But it is their *plurality* that strikes Evagrius: their multiplicity distracts the intellect from the simplicity of God. The intellect is to rise above 'mere thoughts' to a single simple thought in which it knows God. Maximus' treatment is different, because his main concern is the purification of love. 'Mere thoughts' are the way in which we apprehend the world around us, when we have attained the state of *apatheia:* 'if the thoughts

that continually rise up in the heart are free from passion whether the body is awake or asleep, then we may know that we have attained the highest state of dispassion' (*CC*I.93). Such thoughts are 'mere', as we have seen, because our passions are caught up with God, and so these thoughts are no longer the stimulus for possessive passions. 'Mere thoughts', then, for Maximus are a sign of that detachment that enables us to engage in the world and with others in a non-possessive way—with respect. The term for Maximus is not essentially plural, as it is for Evagrius: for Maximus it is the fact that such thoughts are no longer 'impassioned' that is important.

ECSTATIC LOVE

There is another reason why Maximus differs from Evagrius in his understanding of the higher reaches of the life of contemplation: it is again related to his perception that the passage from contemplation to *theologia* is to be understood in terms of love, rather than in terms of simplicity. For here he introduces a theme from Denys the Areopagite: that in its final union with God the intellect is taken out of itself—its love is 'ecstatic' (the Greek means 'standing outside oneself). In the *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation,* Maximus gives an interpretation of the stages of *apatheia* in terms of the sequence: sabbath-sabbaths-sabbaths of sabbaths:[17]

> The sabbath signifies the dispassion of the deiform soul that through practice of the virtues has utterly cast off the marks of sin.
>
> Sabbaths signify the freedom of the deiform soul that through the spiritual contemplation of created nature has quelled even the natural activity of sense-perception.
>
> Sabbaths of sabbaths signify the spiritual calm of the deiform soul that has withdrawn the intellect even from contemplation of all the divine principles in created beings, that through an ecstasy of love has clothed it entirely in God alone, and that through mystical theology has brought it altogether to rest in God.
>
> (*CT* I.37–9)

Elsewhere he speaks of the intellect attaining 'through unknowing the very principle of divine unity' (*CT* II.8). By following Denys in seeing the union of the soul with God in terms of ecstatic love in a union of unknowing, Maximus is enabled to carry through his understanding of the Christian life in terms of the perfection of love right to the end.

ASCETICISM AND DOGMA

So far I have drawn Maximus' ascetical theology entirely from his early works, especially his *Centuries on Love* and his *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation.* How is this carried over in his later writings, when his principal concerns become more theological? In essence what happens is that, whereas his ascetical theology is set firmly against a theological background (as we have seen), his dogmatic and philosophical theology presupposes an ascetic formation. This is explicit in the lengthy discussion of the Monothelite heresy contained in *Opusc.* 7, which begins with a summary of ascetical theology as the basis of the Deacon Marinus' acuity in theological matters. But the interweaving of dogmatic or philosophical with the ascetic is something that is all-pervading and often implicit. It is in fact hard to characterize the kind of theology we find in writings such as the *Books of Difficulties* and the *Questions to Thalassius*—a genre that became typical of Byzantine theology, both Photius' *Amphilochia* and Michael Psellus' theological treatises often taking a similar form, that of commentary on difficult passages in the Fathers, especially St Gregory the Theologian. It moves from philosophical matters to issues of strictly dogmatic theology (for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity, or Christology) to what one might call architectonic themes (for instance, in Maximus, the mutual implication of written law and natural law, the visible realm and the spiritual realm, life in the world and the life of contemplation—all reflected in the microcosmic reality of the human person, and transfigured in the divine-human reality of Christ) to questions of ascetic theology, with no sense that they are separate, but instead illustrating how they mutually coinhere. But having said that, one must add that for Maximus, into whatever realms of speculation his intellect roams, ascetic theology remains fundamental. For instance, in the longest and most fascinating of the *Difficulties,* the tenth (translated below), what initially makes the passage from Gregory's sermon a difficulty is that it seems to envisage an ascent to God by means of 'reason and contemplation'—simply. Union with God by the ascent of the intellect in contemplation seems to ignore ascetic struggle —*praktikê*—altogether. Maximus develops his response by lighting on the 'cloud or veil' that Gregory says the intellect passes through as it ascends to union with God. This, he says, is an allusion to the stage of ascetic struggle, the period when the intellect is veiled or darkened, and needs purification by means of the reordering of the passions and the formation of virtues. Whatever flights of speculation Maximus rises to in the rest of the *Difficulty,* their basis is the absolute

necessity of ascetic struggle, if we are to make any progress towards God.

In this *Difficulty,* and elsewhere, there is another more general difference from the presentation of ascetic theology found in the earlier works. We have already noted that Evagrius, and following him Maximus, develops a classification of the passions based on a broadly Platonic analysis of the make-up of the human soul. At several points in *Difficulty* 10, we find Maximus developing a quite elaborate analysis of the soul, its manner of operation and its relation to the body. He prefaces his extended treatment of the Transfiguration and all that in the Old Testament foreshadowed that occasion with an analysis of the way the soul operates (*Amb.* 10.2–3). Later on there is a detailed analysis of the passionate part of the soul (*Amb.* 10.44). Both these analyses are drawn, quite directly, from a work by Nemesius, fourth-century Bishop of Emesa, called *On human nature.* As we saw earlier, the point of such analysis is diagnostic: an understanding of how the soul is affected by the passions will help in overcoming, or sublimating, them. The source of this analysis in Evagrius and the early Maximus is mainly a kind of practical wisdom worked out by the Desert Fathers and their successors (though we have already noticed some philosophical borrowing); in the *Ambigua* (and also in several of the *opuscula)* such analysis is drawn from the Greek philosophical tradition (especially from Nemesius, who seems to have been something of a favourite with Maximus, and later with St John Damascene). Such a drawing together of ascetic wisdom and the inheritance of Classical and Hellenistic philosophy is also something that, through Maximus, becomes characteristic of later Byzantine theology.

Difficulty 10 presents the most extended discussion of Maximian theology in a single treatise, covering as it does Trinitarian theology and Christology, the doctrine of creation and providence, the relationship between the two Testaments, the nature of the soul's ascent to God, and much else—all focused on the event of the Transfiguration of Christ.[18] In focusing on the Transfiguration, Maximus was picking up an already existing tradition in monastic spirituality: it is already found in the Macarian Homilies,[19] and was destined to become very important to the fourteenth-century hesychasts. But it is found elsewhere in Maximus himself, in the second of his *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation.* It is perhaps worth quoting, as it provides a sketch of the central part of *Difficulty* 10.

> the Lord does not always appear in glory to all who stand before Him. To beginners He appears in the form of a servant (cf.

Phil. 2:7); to those able to follow Him as He climbs the high mountain of His Transfiguration He appears in the form of God (cf. Matt. 17:1–9), the form in which he existed before the world came to be (cf. John 17:5). It is therefore possible for the same Lord not to appear in the same way to all who stand before Him, but to appear to some in one way and to others in another way, according to the measure of each person's faith.

When the Word of God becomes manifest and radiant in us, and His face shines like the sun, then His clothes will also look white (cf. Matt. 17:2). That is to say, the words of the Gospels will then be clear and distinct, with nothing concealed. And Moses and Elijah—the more spiritual principles of the Law and the prophets—will also be present with Him.

It is written that the Son of Man is coming 'with His angels in the glory of the Father' (Matt. 16:27). Similarly, in those found worthy, the Word of God is transfigured to the degree to which each has advanced in holiness, and He comes to them with His angels in the glory of the Father. For the more spiritual principles in the Law and the prophets— symbolized by Moses and Elijah when they appeared with the Lord at His transfiguration—manifest their glory according to the actual receptive capacity of those to whom it is revealed.

He who to some degree has been initiated into the inner principle of the divine unity invariably discovers the inner principles of divine providence and judgment conjoined with it. That is why, like St Peter, he thinks it good that three tabernacles should be made within himself for those who have appeared to him (cf. Matt. 17:4). These tabernacles represent three stages of salvation, namely that of virtue, that of spiritual knowledge and that of theology. The first requires fortitude and self-restraint in the practice of the virtues: of this the type was Elijah. The second requires right discernment in natural contemplation: Moses disclosed this in his own person. The third requires the consummate perfection of wisdom: this was revealed by the Lord. They were called tabernacles, or temporary dwellings, because beyond them there are other still more excellent and splendid stages, through which those found worthy will pass in the age to be.

(*CT* II.13–16)

In *Difficulty* 10, Maximus expands this by a series of 'contemplations', developments of the significance of various events or themes that bear on the Transfiguration. The movement of his mind is not at all systematic, but rather lateral: moving across from one contemplation

to another and building up in a kind of spiral way the various pieces that are needed in place if we are to appreciate the significance of the Transfiguration. It is ascetic theology itself that provides the basic literary element—that of a series of contemplations or meditations—in which Maximus works out his dogmatic and philosophical theology.

4
THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Maximus owes his title 'Confessor' to his defence of the Orthodox doctrine of the Person of Christ, against the theological view, emanating from theological circles in Constantinople, and endorsed by imperial authority, that suggested language of one activity, or one will, in Christ, as a compromise with the Monophysites. It is, however, a striking fact that it is with apparent reluctance that Maximus becomes involved in this controversy. Although he follows Sophronius' lead in rejecting the Alexandrian Pact of Union of 633, to begin with he abides by the *Psephos* of Patriarch Sergius, defending it as implicitly condemning the Alexandrian Pact—which seems somewhat disingenuous. It is only from 640 that he explicitly attacks Monothelitism, and even then he seems anxious to defend Pope Honorius, the originator of the Monothelite formula, from any personal charge of heresy.[1] It would seem, however, that this hesitation was due to a reluctance to engage in public controversy (he was, after all, only a simple monk, not even an abbot), rather than from any lack of clarity about what Christological orthodoxy demanded, as it can be shown that from well before 640 his exposition of Christological doctrine demands duality of energy and of will in the Incarnate Person of Christ. For it is not only in the later Christological *opuscula* that Maximus discusses the doctrine of Christ. Christology is so central to his theological reflection that it is rarely far from his thought: of the works translated in the present volume (most of which must be dated earlier than 635, and the most substantial complete by 630) only one (*Amb.* 1, the first of the later *Difficulties)* is free from allusion to Christology, being a very brief comment on the doctrine of the Trinity.

MAXIMUS' 'CHALCEDONIAN LOGIC'

But before we look at these, it will be useful to say a word about the theological terminology Maximus uses in his exposition of the mystery of Christ (and indeed the mystery of the Trinity). We have already

traced in the first chapter the sequence of events—the theological issues and the conciliar decisions—that culminated in the Monenergist and Monothelite controversy in which Maximus found himself caught up. One feature of that we must now explore more deeply. Christological reflection in the sixth and seventh centuries was overshadowed by the decision of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The heart of the definition of that council is contained in these words:

> So, following the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin Mother of God, as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, onlybegotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.[2]

The unity of Christ is expressed in this definition by the repeated use of 'one and the same'. What precisely it is that is 'one and the same' is not made explicit: biblical titles for the Incarnate One are used—Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten—which were capable of various interpretations. However, we have seen that in the course of the sixth century this point was clarified, and it became accepted that it was 'one of the Trinity', the Son as Second Person of the Trinity, who is the 'one and the same' referred to in this definition. This clarification links Christology and Trinitarian theology, expressing the doctrine of Christ in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity: the one Person, who is the Incarnate Christ, is one of the three Persons of the Trinitarian God.

In fact, the Chalcedonian Definition can be seen as endorsing an already existing tendency to use language forged in reflection on the Trinity as a means of elucidating the doctrine of Christ. Both the

words 'person' (=*prosôpon,* in Greek) and 'subsistent being' (= *hypostasis),* used in the Definition to express the unity of Christ, had already been used in a Trinitarian context to express the distinctness of the three members of the Trinity, especially by the Cappadocian Fathers. The words used in Trinitarian theology to express the unity of the Godhead—being *(=ousia)* and nature *(=physis)*—can also be employed to express what it is that is dual in Christ: in the Chalcedonian Definition, *physis* is thus used and *ousia* occurs as the root of the term 'consubstantial' *(=homoousios).* This tendency to interpret Christological terminology in terms of Trinitarian terminology, and *vice versa,* was by no means well-established, or even commonplace, in the century before Chalcedon, nor can it be claimed that it is at all likely that the Fathers of Chalcedon clearly intended any such idea: the events in the wake of Chalcedon suggest rather that there was a good deal of confusion as to what the decisions of that council really entailed. But, with hindsight, Chalcedon may be regarded as at least lending encouragement to the use of a consistent terminology to be applied in both Christological and Trinitarian contexts.

Maximus takes this further and seeks to work out a thoroughly consistent 'Chalcedonian logic'. He is fond of the four 'Chalcedonian' adverbs—*asynchytôs, atreptôs, adiairetôs, achôristôs* (in the quotation from the Definition above translated as 'which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation')—as key terms in safeguarding the integrity of the natural. Confusion, change, division and separation almost invariably carry a negative connotation with Maximus: it is in these terms that Maximus describes the effects of the Fall on human beings and the cosmos, effects that do not alter the fundamental meaning *(logos)* of natures, but are to be found in the way fallen natures act and interact, so that confusion, division and fragmentation obscure the fundamental reality, disclosed by the *logos* of each nature, of what God has created. In his early second letter (translated below), this tendency is already well-developed. But, more significantly, he takes over from the Cappadocian Fathers one of their ways of explaining the difference between subsistent being *(hypostasis)* and nature in a Trinitarian context, and uses it much more widely: in fact, it becomes for him a fundamental metaphysical distinction. To express what it is that is distinctive about the subsistent beings of the Godhead the Cappadocians had used the term 'mode of existence' *(=tropos tês hyparxeôs).* This leads Maximus to suggest that at the level of being, we find natures defined by their principles, meanings or definitions (all of which can be represented in Greek by the term *logos)*—*ousia, physis,* and *logos* belong together; whereas at the level of person we find 'modes of existence'—*hyparxis,*

hypostasis, and *tropos* belong together.[3] In a Trinitarian context, Maximus will use these distinctions with some care. So, for instance, seeking to explain the movement in the Trinity that an expression of Gregory Nazianzen's apparently implies, he says:

> For the triad is truly monad, because thus it *is,* and the monad truly triad because thus it *subsists*. Thus, there is one Godhead that *is* as monad, and *subsists* as triad. If, hearing of movement, you wonder how the Godhead that is beyond infinity is moved, understand that what happens is happening in us, and not to the Godhead. For first we are illuminated with the reason *[logos]* for its *being,* then we are enlightened about the *mode* in which it *subsists,* for we understand that something is before we understand how it is. Therefore movement in the Godhead is constituted by the knowledge about that it *is* and how it *subsists* that comes about through revelation to those who receive it.
>
> (*Opusc.* 1:1036C)

I have italicized the key words (note, too, that Maximus also expresses the distinction of level as that between *that* something is and *how* it is).

This distinction between what is natural and what is personal is an underlying theme in his metaphysics and becomes a guiding light for Maximus in his exposition of the doctrine of Christ.

CHRISTOLOGY IN MAXIMUS' EARLY WORKS

Christology is central to Maximus' ascetical theology: our ascetic struggle is, as we have seen, a response to the self-emptying of the Word in the Incarnation. The Incarnation itself is regarded by Maximus as a central turning-point in the history of the cosmos. There is a phrase from one of Gregory Nazianzen's sermons—'and the natures are instituted afresh, and God becomes man'[4]—that he is fond of quoting to express this idea of the Incarnation as a turning-point, and to which he devoted one of his *Ambigua* (*Amb.* 41, which is translated below). In the early *Ambigua,* Maximus is mainly concerned with what is involved in the 'instituting afresh' of the natures: in *Amb.* 41 he develops an elaborate notion of the healing of the various 'divisions' found in everything that is. This, also, is something that properly belongs to his cosmic theology, that will be the subject of our final chapter. This is the context in which he discusses Christology: there is little technical discussion of what the union of natures in the one person of Christ involves. The same is true of *Amb.* 10—the longest of all his *Difficulties*—which is the nearest thing there is to a comprehensive statement of Maximian theology.

CHRISTOLOGY AS THE CONVERGENCE OF APOPHATIC AND CATAPHATIC THEOLOGY

One of the early *Ambigua* does, however, discuss the doctrine of Christ more closely, and that is the last (*Amb.* 71), which consists of Maximus' attempt (or rather several attempts) to work out what Gregory of Nazianzus meant when in one of his poems he talks about 'the play of the Word'. For Maximus it is in the Incarnation that the Word can be spoken of as 'playing': in the Incarnation, the Word is 'playing' like a wrestler with 'a kind of keeping to the middle, staying equidistant between the extremes, by weaving about and quickly changing one's position' (1412B). The Incarnate Word mediates between God and man not simply by being constituted as a being that embraces both divinity and humanity, but by something that can only be spoken of in terms of movement—and movement that is paradoxical, a 'still flowing' he calls it (it reminds one of the principles of many of the Eastern martial arts, where the point is to make of oneself a still point so that the energy of one's opponent is turned back on himself). This paradox, that escapes the capacity of human understanding, he expresses in another way: by drawing on the language of apophatic and cataphatic theology (theology of denial and of affirmation), with which he is familiar from the works of Denys the Areopagite. But whereas for the Areopagite, language of apophatic and cataphatic theology is a way of classifying our knowledge of God, for Maximus it is used in relation to the Incarnation. To ascribe 'play' to God is already to embark on apophatic theology, for it is only by denial, Maximus asserts, that play can be ascribed to God. It is like St Paul's ascription to God of 'foolishness' and 'weakness'. Both Paul and Gregory

> by privation of what with us are most powerful attributes point to what the divine possesses, and by negations of what is ours make affirmation of the divine. For with us foolishness, weakness and play are privations—of wisdom, power and prudence, respectively—but when they are attributed to God they clearly mean excess of wisdom, power and prudence… For the transcendent attributes of the divine, spoken of by us in a contrary sense as privations, fall a long way short of their true meaning. If this in its normal sense is true,…then the mystery of the divine Incarnation is called the foolishness and weakness of God according to the holy Apostle Paul, and God's play according to the wonderful and great teacher Gregory, since it oversteps in a way that transcends being every order and harmony of all nature and power and activity.

(1409B-D)

This transcription to the Incarnation of the language of apophatic and cataphatic theology is found elsewhere in Maximus: we find him making similar remarks in his interpretation of the Transfiguration in *Amb.* 10.17 and 31, and in the slightly later *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation* he says:

> If you theologize in an affirmative or cataphatic manner, starting from positive statements about God, you make the Word flesh (cf. John 1:14), for you have no other means of knowing God as cause except from what is visible and tangible. If you theologize in a negative or apophatic manner, through stripping away of positive attributes, you make the Word spirit as being in the beginning God and with God (cf. John 1:1): starting from absolutely none of the things that can be known, you come in an admirable way to know Him who transcends unknowing.
>
> (*CT* II.39)

Although Maximus follows Denys not simply in the language of 'apophatic' and 'cataphatic', but also in some of his ways of explaining what he means by these terms, the way he focuses these two ways of theology on the Incarnate Word supports the contention of Ysabel de Andia that Maximus regards the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic theology as mirroring the patristic distinction between 'theology' and 'economy'—that is, the distinction between the doctrine of God as He is in Himself (in other words, the doctrine of the Trinity) and the doctrine of God's dealings with the world, especially in the Incarnation.[5]

MAXIMUS AND MONENERGISM: DENYS' NOTION OF A 'THEANDRIC ENERGY'

Explicit, though still very tentative, discussions of the doctrine of Christ seem to begin to come from Maximus' pen around 633. This is hardly surprising, as Sophronius' protest at the Alexandrian Pact of Union must have provoked discussion and, because of his closeness to the future Patriarch of Jerusalem, Maximus was bound to be involved. One of the pieces translated here directly concerns Christology and is from this period: that is the last of the later *Ambigua,* the fifth. There is nothing overtly polemical about this piece, which is an exposition of the fourth letter ascribed to Denys the Areopagite. But it is implicitly polemical, since this letter contains the key phrase quoted by the Monenergists—'one divine-human (or

theandric) activity'. According to all the manuscripts of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* that we possess, this letter in fact refers to 'a *new* theandric activity', and this is the reading Maximus knows and uses as the basis for his exposition. But since all the Greek manuscripts of the Dionysian writings go back to the edition prepared by John of Scythopolis in the middle of the sixth century, and John was himself anxious to present Denys as an orthodox Cyrilline Chalcedonian, the authenticity of the Monophysite/Monenergist/Monothelite reading 'one theandric activity' cannot be ruled out.

Amb. 5 consists of a lengthy paraphrase of Denys the Areopagite's fourth letter. In this letter Denys explains that in the Incarnation God is called human, not as being the cause of humanity (which is the ground of 'cataphatic' theology, in accordance with which God can be called everything of which he is the cause, that is, everything that is), but because 'he is himself in his whole being truly a man'. Denys then goes on to explain how in the Incarnation there is a comherence of divine and human, so that Christ does human things divinely and divine things humanly, and thus manifests 'a certain new theandric activity'. It is not difficult to suspect Denys' language of deliberately contradicting the *Tome of Leo* with its assertion that 'each form does what is proper to it in communion with the other'. It is hardly surprising that those who rejected the *Tome of Leo* called in support of their position this letter of Denys'. Maximus' paraphrase is intended to show that the fourth letter is entirely in accordance with Chalcedonian orthodoxy. It is, however, Chalcedonian orthodoxy read in the light of Cyril—Cyrilline Chalcedonianism. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the interpretation of Jesus' walking on the water—listed by Leo as an example of an unequivocably divine activity—where Maximus seems to be following Severus of Antioch (entirely unwittingly, one imagines, given his habitual denunciation of the Monophysite patriarch): 'if then with unmoistened feet, which have bodily bulk and the weight of matter, he traversed the wet and unstable substance, walking on the sea as on a pavement, he shows through this crossing that the natural energy of his own flesh is inseparable from the power of his divinity' (1049BC: and see my note *ad loc.*). For the rest Maximus insists on the integrity of the human nature assumed by the divine Person. He spells out, in accordance with the Chalcedonian Definition, that the human nature of Christ included a human soul, and was in every way like ours, save for sin. He also cites his favourite Christological text from Gregory the Theologian about the natures being 'instituted afresh', applying this first to the virginal conception, and then to the new form that the activity of the Incarnate One takes (his principal example being the walking on the water, already mentioned). But even as he explains how, in the Incarnation,

'natures are instituted afresh', he makes clear that this newness in no way encroaches on the *logoi* (principles) of the natures. What is new is the *tropoi* 'preserved in the constancy of the natural *logoi'* (1052A). The integrity of the natures entails the integrity of their activities or energies:

> the coming together of these [natures] effects the great mystery of the nature *[physiologia]* of Jesus who is beyond nature, and shows that in this the difference and the union of the energies are preserved, the [difference] beheld without division in the natural *logos* of what has been united, and the [union] acknowledged without confusion in the monadic mode *[tropos]* of what has come to pass.
>
> (1052B)

Further on, Maximus spells out—using the language of apophatic and cataphatic theology in relation to Christ in the way we have already discussed—that Christ, as the God-man, embraces the extremes of divinity and humanity, but not so as to be himself something in between (he is not like a 'griffin'). He has a double energy, not an intermediate energy. What is new is not a newly fashioned unique nature (with a correspondingly new and unique energy), but rather a new mode of existence: the *logos* of the mystery of Christ, is in fact an ineffable 'mode of coming together' *[tropos tês symphuias]* (1056C–1057A).

Whether Maximus' interpretation of Denys is one that Denys himself would have recognized may be doubted, but it is hard to say that it is not a possible one, and it certainly stands in a tradition of interpretation that goes back at least to John of Scythopolis. If Denys has been 'Chalcedonized', we must also recognize that, in the meantime, Chalcedon had been 'Cyrillized'.

MAXIMUS AND MONOTHELITISM

The two theological *opuscula* translated below belong to the early 640s, by which time Maximus had come out as an opponent of Monothelitism. The earlier one (*Opusc.* 7) is a treatise against Monothelitism, in the form of a letter addressed to Marinus, a Cypriot deacon; the other (*Opusc.* 3) seems to be part of a lengthy treatise *On Energies and Wills,* but in its present form is the third part of another treatise, addressed to the same Marinus, in which Maximus explains in what sense we must, and in what sense we cannot, say that there are two wills in the Incarnate One. Together they make clear

Maximus' mature Christological position, and his reasons for holding to it.

Monenergism—and later Monothelitism—was devised as a refinement of Cyrilline Chalcedonian Christology that, it was hoped, would provide a bridge to those called Monophysites. We have seen from the historical account given above in chapter 1 that it had remarkable success in the 620s and early 630s. The key to these positions was to admit that in Christ two natures—one divine and one human—had come together, but to insist that, having come together, they constituted an indivisible unity, a unity that could be discerned in the single unique activity of the Incarnate One, or— according to the later refinement—in a single unique will. The terms for activity and will *(energeia* and *thelêma)* admit of ambiguity, an ambiguity that, according to Maximus, lay behind the plausibility of these heresies. Both activity and will can refer either to a process— acting, willing—or to the result—the act done, the deed willed. The result is clearly one: the actions of Christ are the actions of a single person, and even though what he willed may be the result of an inward struggle (most obviously, in the case of the agony in the garden), what he committed himself to as a result of that inward struggle he committed himself to whole-heartedly—Christ was clearly not torn between alternative courses of action in a way that sapped his will. It was by exploiting this ambiguity that Monenergism gained acceptance among those committed to Chalcedon, amongst whom could be included Maximus who in one of the early *Ambigua* (and also in the second letter) spoke of there being 'one single activity in everything, of God and of God's Saints' (*Amb.* 7:1076C), an expression he was later (*c.* 645) to retract (*Opusc.* 1:33A).

The main plank of Maximus' rejection of Monothelitism is to expose this ambiguity, which he does by deploying what we have called his 'Chalcedonian logic'. According to this logic there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the natural level and the personal level. So far as activity and will as processes are concerned, they belong to the natural level: activity, and in the case of rational creatures, will—as a process—proceeds from nature, it is bound up with the movement that belongs to nature. But so far as result is concerned, activity and will are an expression of the personal, they express the particular way or mode *(tropos)* in which a nature moves in relation to other natures.

Before we see how Maximus applies this 'Chalcedonian logic' to the Incarnation, let us see how it applies to creation and fall. For Maximus, everything natural has been created by God, and because of that, nothing natural can be opposed to God:

> For if anyone were to say that something natural had resisted God, this would be rather a charge against God than against nature, for introducing war naturally to the realm of being and raising up insurrection against himself and strife among all that exists.
>
> (*Opusc.* 7:80A)

The result of the Fall is not that natures are distorted in themselves, but rather that natures are misused: the Fall exists at the level not of *logos,* but of *tropos.* 'We have become inclined to every evil because of the primordially wicked serpent, but in accordance with our constitution, we exist naturally as honoured creatures, moulded by God' (ibid. 80B). In a fallen world the *logoi* of everything natural remain inviolate, but natures may act in a way (or mode, *tropos)* that runs counter to their fundamental *logoi.* Behaviour is no longer transparent, the *logoi* are obscured by the *tropoi* that the natures assume. That is why ascetic struggle is necessary to recover the dispassion that enables us to practise natural contemplation, in which we can see the *logoi* of natural things (as we saw in chapter 3 above). The fact that the Fall does not touch the level of nature does not entail that the effects of the Fall are superficial, simply that no creature has the power to overthrow the fundamental design of the Creator. But the Fall does mean that fallen creatures exist in a world they can no longer understand.

These principles apply to the Incarnation which 'is an effective demonstration of both nature and economy, I mean of the natural *logos* of what has been united, confirming the mode of the hypostatic union, and "instituting afresh the natures", without any change or confusion' (*Opusc.* 3:48C). The integrity of the human nature assumed by the Son of God—an integrity safeguarded by the four 'adverbs' in the Chalcedonian Definition, two of which Maximus alludes to here—is rooted in God's respect for the beings he created: the divine economy cannot override or undermine the created order. It follows, therefore, that the human nature assumed by the Word lacks nothing necessary for its full created integrity. For Maximus this means a human nature with a fully human activity and a fully human will.

MAXIMUS' UNDERSTANDING OF PERSON

In making this explicit in his rejection of Monothelitism, Maximus was moving into uncharted territory. Earlier reflection on the Agony in the Garden had interpreted this in terms of the human submission of the Incarnate One to the divine will:[6] in making explicit that this must involve the submission of a human will to the divine will

Maximus was breaking new ground. To do this involved thinking through what was meant by the hypostatic union, and indeed what was meant by the term *hypostasis*.[7] It is tempting to see a progress in one strand of Christian thought about the Incarnation from an idea that barely avoids docetism in which God appears in human form, through Apollinarianism in which the human mind is replaced by the divine mind, to the position of Orthodoxy in which the divine Son assumes a fully human nature. From such a point of view, Maximus represents the final clarification of Orthodoxy. Landmarks on the way would be St Athanasius' assertion that 'the Lord came not to show himself, but to heal and teach those who were suffering',[8] and the principle enunciated by St Gregory of Nazianzus that 'the unassumed is the unhealed, only that which is united to God is saved'.[9] From seeing Christ as God appearing in human form, theological reflection moved to seeing Christ as the Son of God living a fully human life. The great Ecumenical Councils trace this theological journey, but its starting-point is the conviction that in Christ one encounters God as person and its guiding light the growing realization that this entails that the person of the Incarnate One is the Word, the divine Son, 'One of the Trinity'. The critical issue is: what is a person? And the heresies that litter this theological path— docetism, Apollinarianism, Eutychianism, Monenergism, Monothelitism—can be seen as the result of premature attempts to resolve this issue. (It should be said, in fairness, that many scholars would see this theological path as leading nowhere, or narrowing down to vanishing-point: but if this path does lead somewhere, then it is Maximus to whom we must attend if we want to understand where.)

What is Maximus' answer to this problem? It is guided, as will now be evident, by his 'Chalcedoman logic'. Person is contrasted to nature: it is concerned with the way we are (the mode, or *tropos*), not what we are (principle, or *logos*). When he became incarnate— when he assumed human nature—the Word became everything that we are. But he did it in his own way, because he is a person, just as we are human in our own way, because we are persons. Maximus sometimes, as we have seen, expresses this distinction of levels by distinguishing between existence *(hyparxis)* or subsisting *(hyphistanai,* from which the noun, *hypostasis*) and being (*ousia,* or *einai*): persons exist, nature are. Whatever we share with others, we are: it belongs to our nature. But what it is to be a person is not some thing, some quality, that we do *not* share with others—as if there were an irreducible somewhat within each one of us that makes us the unique persons we are. What is unique about each one of us is what we have made of the nature that we have: our own unique mode of existence, which is a matter of our experience in the past, our hopes for the future, the way we live

out the nature that we have. What makes the Son of God the unique person he is is the eternal life of love in the Trinity in which he shares in a filial way.

MAXIMUS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE WILL

There are several problems in the way of understanding Maximus' conception of willing. The first is quite simply that it seems that his analysis of the human will, though it draws on earlier thought, not least that of Aristotle, is largely original. Maximus is not using an already available notion of the will, but thinking through something that appears to be quite new in the history of human thought (though Maximus was anxious not to appear to be an 'innovator').[10] But if, as has been suggested, Maximus virtually creates the notion of the will,[11] understanding him is compounded by the fact that this notion, so central to Maximus' understanding of what it is to be human, is also something that much modern thought tends to take for granted. For whatever problems there are in understanding Maximus, it is certainly *not* the case that he has an oversimplified way of understanding human nature, but rather that we have, borne to us by the concepts and values of our Western culture that has shaped us. Maximus' understanding of human nature is many-layered: more than some other Fathers is he free from the tendency (found in many classical philosophers, too) to oversimplify what it is to be human, and to locate the human in our intellectual, rational capacity. Rather to be human is to be a creature that loves with a love that integrates the several layers of our being, layers some of which we share with the non-rational, and even non-animal creation. In so far as it belongs to the twentieth century (and also some earlier ones) to oversimplify what it is to be human, and locate that in our will, in our (pretended) ability to do what we want, to choose between this and that, such an oversimplification makes Maximus utterly opaque to our understanding.

For Maximus, what is distinctive about being human is self-determination (*autexousios kinêsis:* movement that is within one's own power). Twice Maximus takes his definition of what is involved in self-determination from the fifth-century bishop, Diadochus of Photikê: 'self-determination is the unhindered willing of a rational soul towards whatever it wishes'.[12] This self-determination is not, however, absolute: human beings are created in God's image, and it is in their self-determination that they reflect God's image. This self-determination is, then, ordered towards God: human beings are creatures whose nature finds its fulfilment in their freely turning towards the God to whom they owe their being. What is meant by

freedom, in this sense, is lack of coercion. But freewill is not directionless. Willing is, for Maximus, something that is rooted in the nature of rationality, something underlined in several definitions he cites from Clement of Alexandria: 'Willing is a natural power, that desires what is natural. Willing is a natural desire that corresponds to the nature of the rational. Willing is natural, the self-determining movement of the self-governing mind.'[13] But with fallen creatures, their own nature has become opaque to them, they no longer know what they want, and experience coercion in trying to love what cannot give fulfilment. For, in their fallen state, rational creatures are no longer aware of their true good, which is God. Various apparent goods attract them: they are confused, they need to deliberate and consider, and their way of willing shares in all this. Maximus calls this willing in accordance with an opinion, or intention, or inclination (the Greek word for all these is *gnômê*). Such 'gnomic' willing is our way or mode of willing, it is the only way in which we can express our natural will, but it is a frustrating and confusing business.

This distinction between natural will and 'gnomic' will is fundamental to Maximus' understanding of the hypostatic union. In the Incarnate One there are two natural wills, because there are two natures (and two activities). But there is no 'gnomic' will in Christ. *Opusc.* 3 is devoted to this fundamental distinction. There are two natural wills, for the Incarnation is itself the expression of the divine will, that is common to the Persons of the Trinity, who are consubstantial one with another, and entails the assumption of human nature including the natural human will which is 'the power that longs for what is natural'. But there are not two 'gnomic' wills: there is not really any 'gnomic' will at all, for the process of formulating an intention *(gnômê)* as a necessary stage in coming to a decision and acting on it is not part of the 'mode of existence' of a divine Person at all, who is not to be thought of as deprived of knowledge of the good. What happens in the Incarnation is that 'the Incarnate Word possesses as a human being the natural disposition to will, and this is moved and shaped by the divine will' (48A). Both the *opuscula* translated below discuss the Lord's Agony in the Garden, and both interpret this as manifesting the duality of will in Christ, but a duality that expresses the duality of Christ's nature, not his 'double-mindedness'. Christ's prayer in Gethsemane shows, 'in the shrinking, the determination of the human will shaped and brought to be (in harmony with the divine will) in accordance with the interweaving of the natural *logos* with the mode of the economy' (48C). *Opusc.* 3 closes with the assertion that

> The Fathers…openly confessed the difference between the two natural, but not *gnomic,* wills in Christ. They did not however say that there was any difference of *gnomic* wills in Christ, lest they proclaim him double-minded and double-willed, and fighting against himself, so to speak, in the discord of his thoughts, and therefore double-personed. For they knew that it was only this difference of *gnomic* wills that introduced into our lives sin and our separation from God. For evil consists in nothing else than this difference of our *gnomic* will from the divine will, which occurs by the introduction of an opposing quantity, thus making them numerically different, and shows the opposition of our *gnomic* will to God.
>
> (56BC)

The idea that Christ did not deliberate (which is what is meant by not having a '*gnomic* will') seems very strange, since deliberating between different choices is what we are accustomed to think that freewill is all about. In the course of her criticism of current trends of moral philosophy in the *The Sovereignty of Good,* Iris Murdoch at one point observes that 'freedom is not strictly exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action' (Murdoch 1970, 67). From this point of view deliberation is what we fall back on when our vision is clouded or confused: it is a measure of our *lack* of freedom, not the signal exercise of freedom. That Murdoch may help us to understand Maximus' picture of Christ is not perhaps surprising. Earlier on in *The Sovereignty of Good,* she maintains that 'one of the main problems of moral philosophy might be formulated thus: are there any techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?' (Murdoch 1970, 54). That is a good way of formulating the approach of Byzantine ascetic theology, not least the approach of Maximus. And Maximus' ascetic theology is, as we have seen, closely bound up with his dogmatic theology.

5
COSMIC THEOLOGY

It is often claimed that one of the characteristics of Greek—or Orthodox—theology is that it possesses a 'cosmic' dimension. It is a claim made both about patristic theology, where it is maintained that Latin theology came to lose its 'cosmic' dimension in comparison with the Greeks, and about modern theology, where members of the Orthodox Church (both Greek and Russian) are accustomed to making large claims about their having preserved a 'cosmic' dimension in their theology, as compared with the more limited horizons of Western Christian thought.[1] Such a cosmic dimension to Christian theology can be found in the New Testament, especially in Romans 8 and in the later (possibly deutero-)Pauline epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians. To the Romans, Paul says that 'creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God;…because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now' (Rom. 8:19, 21–2). What in Romans is an allusion becomes a central theme in Colossians and Ephesians, which speaks of the 'mystery of [God the Father's] will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1:9–10).

MAN AS MICROCOSM

This sense of a cosmic dimension is the convergence of various concerns. One tributary is a commonplace of much classical philosophy which saw the human being and the cosmos as mutually-reflecting images. In the cosmological myth related by Timaeus in the Platonic dialogue of that name (the most influential account of the nature of the cosmos in antiquity and late antiquity), the cosmos is said to have come into existence as 'a living creature endowed with soul and reason' (*Timaeus.* 30B), that is, analogous to a human being.

Conversely the human person is often described as a 'little cosmos' (*mikros kosmos:* contracted at the time of the Renaissance into 'microcosm'). The interlocking realities of human being and cosmos implied by such ways of thinking encouraged interpretations of the biblical story of the human race, leading from Fall in Adam to Redemption in Christ the Second Adam, that saw reflected in that story a cosmic disaster as the consequence of the Fall and the restoration of the cosmos as the final purpose of Christ's saving work. Another tributary was the growing tendency to interpret the creation story of Genesis in terms of creation out of nothing by the Word of God. This quickly became a settled conviction, since it provided a rational justification for the huge claims that Christians were making for Redemption in Christ when they spoke of his *cosmic* victory. For if creation was the work of the Word of God and if Christ was himself the Word of God Incarnate, then it made sense to claim that nothing in the created order could call in question Christ's victory.

THE FALL—A COSMIC DISASTER

In Greek theology, it became commonplace to interpret the Christian story in cosmic, or metaphysical, terms. Even St Athanasius, a Christian thinker of relatively unsophisticated philosophical culture, interprets the Fall in terms of corruption and death, seen as affecting the whole cosmic order. He explains why the disastrous effects of Adam's sin could not be arrested by his repentance by saying that 'if there had been only sin and not its consequence of corruption, repentance would have been very well. But…human beings are now prisoners to natural corruption.'[2] Corruption, and its consequence and sign, death, need to be arrested, and the only power equal to that is the power of 'the Word of God, who also in the beginning had created the universe from nothing'.[3] Athanasius also attempts to root the nature of corruption in the fact that the cosmos has been created out of nothing: he speaks of 'corruption that leads to non-being',[4] corruption leads creatures back to the non-being out of which they were created. Athanasius' unsophisticated, but evocative, ideas are constantly encountered in later Greek theology. It is a cosmic theology in that it is the cosmic dimensions of Adam's Fall and Christ's Redemption that bring out their true significance.[5]

GNOSTICISM AND THE COSMOS

But other kinds of cosmic theology had been broached among Greek Christians. Gnosticism itself had been a form of cosmic theology. In fact, the story of fall and redemption had been projected on to a

canvas much broader than the cosmos consisting of the earth and the heavens: the elaborate myths of the gnostics told of a pre-cosmic, heavenly drama, and the cosmos itself was, as often as not, an abortive consequence of a heavenly fall. The cosmos was bracketed between fall and redemption: it was essentially fallen, and Redemption was escape from it. The Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing was probably first formulated as part of the second-century reaction against gnosticism:[6] as well as upholding the sovereignty of the one God against the kind of fragmentation implicit in the gnostic system of aeons, it affirmed the essential goodness of the cosmos. It was in the good cosmos that God had made from nothing that the Fall had taken place, and Redemption, as we have sketched above, involved restoration of the cosmos.

ORIGENIST COSMOLOGY

But the idea of a cosmic fall, that is a fall from some other state resulting in the cosmos, was tenacious, and is one of the points in which the great third-century theologian Origen, who had himself argued against many of the tenets of gnosticism, found himself in fundamental agreement with the gnostics. For Origen, Christianity is essentially a cosmic story. In the beginning all rational beings had been created equal, and through the Word of God had gazed in contemplation on the unique Godhead of the Father. The Fall was the result of a lessening of their attention, and a consequent turning away from contemplation of God (owing to satiety, Origen said: they had had enough). Their ardour cooled (Origen derived soul, *psyche,* from *psychros,* cold, or *psychesthai, t*o cool) and they fell into a cosmos consisting of bodies.[7] The cosmos was created by God to arrest the fall of the rational beings, and was a carefully calibrated system, with bodies of varying degrees of density, so that the fate of the fallen souls exactly matched the extent of their turning away from God: those whose lack of attention had been momentary became angels, those whose turning from God was more settled became demons, and in between there were human beings.

Such a cosmos was a demonstration of God's providence and judgment: his providence provided this carefully structured cosmos and his judgment determined the exact position of each soul within it. Each soul would find that its position in the cosmos answered its need, so that the effort required to turn back to God was neither so demanding as to lead to despair nor so slight as to make barely any difference. Perhaps more than one cosmos (and thus more than one lifetime) would be needed, but God's providence and judgment were not to be thwarted: finally all the rational beings would retain their

original equality as, through the Word of God, they again contemplated with all their powers the one God. 'For the end,' as Origen repeatedly stated, 'is always like the beginning.'[8]

MAXIMUS' CORRECTION OF ORIGENISM

As we have seen, Origenism retained its following among the more intellectual Greek monks, despite the condemnations of the sixth century, and much of Maximus' effort in his earlier *Ambigua* is directed to meeting the challenge of this kind of cosmic theology. Ultimately, Maximus' response is to develop a more adequate cosmic theology of his own, or rather to draw out of the riches of the Orthodox theological tradition the true cosmic theology that Origenism had distorted. There are several strands in Maximus' thinking here. Some are quite technical and philosophical: Origenism is wrong, in part, because it has an inaccurate analysis of the way things are. Here Maximus corrects, but often (indeed usually) corrects very gently: he retains much of the language and concepts of Origenism but corrects it by thinking it through again. He draws the Origenist monks into his way of thinking, he does not simply refute their ideas. And perhaps the deepest reason for this is that Maximus shares many of the concerns of Origenist monks: like them he sees the cosmos as an environment of God's loving care, his providence, so that to return to unity and contemplation is to fulfil the nature of rational creatures within the cosmos. Like them, he thinks that understanding — philosophical understanding—matters. But unlike them (perhaps: we have no very clear idea about these 'Origenist' monks[9]), he rejects their intellectualism and develops an understanding of the cosmos to which the *Incarnate* Word is central.

Much has been written on Maximus' correction of Origenism. Here I shall only sketch in a few important points: precisely because of the care Maximus takes in rethinking Origenism a full understanding of what he achieved would demand a detailed analysis that would be out of place in such an introduction as this.[10] But perhaps the most fundamental revision Maximus demanded of the Origenist cosmology concerned its conviction that originally there had been a state of perfection, of rest, from which the rational beings fell (and to which they would eventually be restored). This could be stated concisely as a triad: becoming-rest-movement. Rational beings *become* (that is, come to be), they first enjoyed a state of *rest* and contemplation, they fell and initiated *movement*. For Maximus this triad has to be replaced by another: becoming-movement-rest. This, for Maximus, much more accurately captures the condition of created beings. First, they come to be. This is itself a change, a form of movement, so becoming

immediately issues in movement, and it is the purpose of movement to find rest: rest will be our final state.[11] This correction of Origenism is much more far-reaching. In starting from rest, the Origenists manifested their fundamental affinity with Neoplatonism, which saw the whole of reality as subject to the circular sequence of rest-procession-return. Maximus is familiar with Neoplatonic thought, and picks up several of their ideas (mainly through Denys and his first editor John of Scythopolis, or so it appears), but his rejection of Origenism in the terms we have seen entails also a fundamental rebuttal of Neoplatonism, with its ideas of emanation and return. For Maximus we are created by God with a view to finally resting in him: it is this that undergirds his Christian metaphysic.[12]

But the fact that Maximus revises Origenist (and Neoplatonic) ideas of reality enables him to preserve much of the Origenist analysis of the condition of created beings as a state of movement, without conceding anything to their myth of an original state of rest. Adam in paradise should have moved towards and around God, and in that way found rest. Instead he moved away from God and towards beings lower than himself, and condemned himself to continual movement, leading to further movement, and not to an ultimate rest at all.[13] It is in terms like this—essentially in terms of desire and longing frustrated by being misdirected—that Maximus is fond of analysing the human condition. Other elements of Origenism rethought in Maximus' theology concern the Origenist understanding of the cosmos as a place where we discover our fallen state and learn to love God. Much of this Maximus is keen to take over. The doctrine of the *logoi* of created beings, the fundamental meaning in accordance with which they have been created, is an idea developed by Origen: it is these *logoi* that form the main object of natural contemplation. In Greek there is an obviousness about the links of this doctrine that is obscured in English, for *logos* means reason, meaning, or word, and is the same word as that used for the Word of God, through whom the universe was created and who became Incarnate. The *logos* of created things is present to them in a way analogous to the presence of the *Logos* (the Word) in Christ. The Greek word for 'rational', *logikos,* is the adjective from *logos:* it suggests participation in the *Logos*. There is also a kind of obviousness about the idea that rational beings, *logikoi,* should be able to understand the *logoi* of creation, but that, cut off from the *Logos,* because of the Fall, the *logoi* of creation are now obscure to them. All of these links run through Maximus' theology. But in Maximus' thought the doctrine of the *logoi* takes on an anti-Origenist turn, for his doctrine of the integrity of the *logoi* consorts ill with the Origenist contention that the cosmos is *essentially* fallen. Similarly, the doctrine of providence and judgment—as central

to Maximian as to Origenist theology—is detached by Maximus from its origins in the Origenist myth of the cosmos as the place of fallen souls.

PASSING THROUGH THE CLOUD

Amb. 7 is perhaps the most detailed rebuttal of the errors of Origenism, and has been thoroughly analysed by Dom Polycarp Sherwood (Sherwood 1955a), but Maximus' revision of Origenism is set in the widest context in the first of the *Ambigua* translated below, *Amb.* 10. This is the longest of the *Difficulties,* and perhaps the most obscure, at first sight. It concerns, as do all the early *Ambigua,* a passage from the writings of St Gregory the Theologian. What seems to have engaged Maximus' attention here is that Gregory seems to speak of ascent to assimilation to God by reason and contemplation without making any mention of the stage of ascetic struggle: Maximus makes this clear in his first sentence, and states uncompromisingly that, in his view, the only truly satisfactory philosophy is 'true judgment concerning reality and activity, supported by ascetic struggle' (1108A). It appears from this that the intellectualist Origenist monks whom Maximus has in mind in his criticisms underplayed, or even discounted, what for Maximus (and for Evagrius before him) was the foundation of any spiritual progress, namely *praktikê,* or ascetic struggle. In this they may have been following too closely their master Origen, of whom it has been said that 'he is an optimist for whom the struggle against the passions is a preliminary stage in one's interior development, to be passed through quickly' (Harl 1958, 321). What engages Origen, and it may be the Origenist monks (subject to the proviso mentioned above, that we really know very little about them), is interpretation of Scripture and contemplation of the cosmos, that is an engagement with the Word of God, the *Logos,* leading to contemplation of, and assimilation to, God.

For Maximus, too, engagement with Scripture and natural contemplation leading to union with God is at the heart of the Christian life, but ascetic struggle is not simply an initial stage to be accomplished as quickly as possible, it is an abiding concern of the spiritual life. The most fundamental reason for this is that, paradoxically, ascetic struggle can achieve nothing on its own. The suspicion that Origen and (perhaps with greater justice) the Origenist monks gave rise to was that the providential order of the cosmos would suffice in itself to accomplish the return of fallen souls to union with God: all souls need to do is co-operate. For Maximus any such idea grossly underestimates the damage done by the Fall. As we have already seen, ascetic struggle is, for Maximus, a response to God's self-

emptying love in the Incarnation: apart from that it is nothing, ascetic struggle can achieve nothing on its own. Maximus brings out these points in *Amb.* 10 by the structural significance that the metaphor of the 'cloud' plays in it. In the passage from Gregory's sermon with which this *Difficulty* engages there is mention of the 'fleshly' being called 'cloud or veil'. It is by overlooking this that the Origenists find support from Gregory for their ignoring (or rapidly passing over) ascetic struggle. For Maximus, on the contrary, it is the imagery of the cloud that makes clear the crucial significance of ascetic struggle, for both the reasons outlined above. The first three sections of this *Difficulty* discuss how the soul operates in conjunction with the body. The fleshly, that is the disordered lower part of the soul, obscures and obstructs the soul's natural movement towards God (which is fulfilled in contemplation): it is fittingly called the cloud, therefore, and engagement with the cloud is precisely ascetic struggle, and is seen to be not so much preliminary as fundamental.

But as Maximus discusses the significance of the cloud, his mind moves *laterally*—to the biblical imagery of the cloud. (It is important to be open to the lateral movement of Maximus' reflections: otherwise it is difficult to discern any train of thought at all.) Section 4 begins a series of meditations (or contemplations: *theôriai*) of passages from the Old Testament. It is the cloud, that led the people of Israel in the desert, that introduces these considerations, but because this cloud is first mentioned at the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14. 15–29; cloud mentioned at verse 19), Maximus' mind moves—again laterally—to the notion of crossing *(diabasis)* that is the general subject of the passage from Gregory that he is expounding.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

These examples from the Old Testament culminate in the meditation on the Transfiguration that they all prefigure. In the Transfiguration, the themes of crossing over and the cloud are once again brought together, but this time in conjunction with the Incarnation. The Incarnation reveals the mutually-encountering crossings-over—of God to humankind and of humankind to God. In the Transfiguration the glory of God Incarnate is revealed; in the Transfiguration the disciples pass over 'from flesh to spirit' and behold 'the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. But Maximus draws our attention to the fact that in the Transfiguration it is not only the face of the Incarnate One that is transfigured with light, but also his clothes, and he suggests that the radiant garments have a double significance. The radiant garments can be understood as a 'symbol of the words of Holy Scripture, which in this case became shining and

clear and limpid to [the disciples], and were grasped by the mind without any riddling puzzle or symbolic shadow, revealing the meaning that lay hidden within them' (1128B). Or the radiant garments can be understood as a symbol of 'creation itself…which can be understood, through the wise variety of the various forms that it contains, on the analogy of a garment, to be the worthy power of the generative Word who wears it' (1128BC). But in both cases—whether through the interpretation of Scripture, or through discerning the *logoi* of the created order—what one encounters, or rather the one whom one encounters, is the Transfigured, and therefore Incarnate, Word of God. There is not then, as Origen sometimes seems to suggest, a movement away from the Incarnation to some higher eternal reality ('Wisdom hidden in a mystery' in contrast to the Word 'made flesh', as Origen once put it),[14] but rather an ever deepening engagement with the Incarnate Word. Maximus puts this concisely later on when he says:

> The knowledge of all that has come to be through [the Lord] is naturally and properly made known together with Him. For just as with the rising of the sensible sun all bodies are made known, so it is with God, the intelligible sun of righteousness, rising in the mind: although He is known to be separate from the created order, he wishes the true *logoi* of everything, whether intelligible or sensible, to be made known together with Himself. And this is shown on the mount of the Transfiguration of the Lord when both the brightness of his garments and the light of His face made Him known, and drew to God the knowledge of those who were after Him and around Him.
>
> (*Amb.* 10. 27:1156AB)

The sections that follow the meditation on the Transfiguration (section 17) consist of a long series of considerations of the way in which, in the Incarnate One, all the forms of God's revelation are summed up and become comprehensible. Section 18 discusses the complementarity of the written law (of the Scriptures) and the natural law (discerned in the order of the cosmos). The natural law is like a book, and the written law like another cosmos. The next section once again engages directly with the Origenist monks. Evagrius had spoken of five principal modes of contemplation: of the adorable and holy Trinity, of incorporeal beings, of corporeal beings, of judgment and of providence:[15] from realizing one's place in God's providential order (judgment and providence), one rose from contemplation of bodies to the incorporeal and thence to contemplation of God. Maximus speaks instead of five modes of natural contemplation: the

first three concern God as Creator, Provider and Judge, and the final two 'educate us to virtue and assimilation to God' (1133B). On the one hand Maximus incorporates ascetic struggle, and on the other restricts contemplation to what God has revealed of Himself: engagement with God in Himself is a matter of God's 'drawing up to His ineffable self every thought of intellectual beings in ecstasy' (1140A), as he puts it in the following section, a meditation on the figure of Melchisedec. Further on he makes clear that there can be no natural contemplation independent of the Incarnation by bracketing together 'His most wise providence, which binds all things together, and His economy for our sake, which is passing marvellous and transcendently ineffable' (*Amb.* 10. 21:1145D). This understanding of natural contemplation as embracing both a true understanding of the created cosmic order through beholding its *logoi* and a grasp of the economy of salvation, especially in the Incarnation, is already found in Gregory of Nyssa, who may have influenced Maximus here.[16]

THE DIVISION OF BEING

Another concern of Maximus' cosmic theology revolves round the notion of the divisions of being. In his treatment of this he draws together a metaphysical analysis of being that places the human person at a kind of central crossing-place in his understanding of reality, and then relates to that the renewal of nature through the Incarnation, and the celebration and recapitulation of that renewal in the Eucharistic liturgy. Maximus does this by drawing together threads from the earlier theologians, especially St Gregory of Nyssa, and the author of those writings ascribed to Denys the Areopagite (in the latter case he acknowledges his indebtedness). From Gregory he borrows the way the earlier theologian had understood the whole of reality as consisting of successive divisions. It is a theme Gregory often returned to, and in different works treated sometimes in slightly different ways. But his basic pattern looks like this. All beings can be divided into uncreated beings (consisting only of the blessed Trinity) and created beings. Created beings can be further subdivided into intelligible beings and sensible beings. Each of these classes can be further subdivided: intelligible beings into celestial beings (=angels) and terrestrial beings (=human beings); and sensible beings into living beings and lifeless beings. Living beings can be divided into sentient and non-sentient beings; sentient beings into rational beings (=human beings) and irrational beings (=animals). And note that these successive divisions converge on the human being who embraces all the divisions to be found in created reality.[17]

Difficulty 41 is built up around this notion of the divisions of being. According to the Saints, Maximus begins (an expression that always means that he in introducing a traditional notion, and often something that can be precisely paralleled in earlier Fathers, as here), there are five divisions of being. The first divides uncreated nature from that which is created. The second divides created being into that perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses. The sensible realm is further divided into heaven and earth; earth into paradise and the inhabited world (what the Greeks called the *oikoumenê*). Within the inhabited world human beings dwell and these are divided by sex into male and female. But the human being is not just the last stage in this structure, it is, as he says, 'the laboratory in which everything is concentrated and in itself naturally mediates between the extremities of each division', for human beings are found on both sides of each division: they belong in paradise but inhabit the inhabited world; they are earthly and yet destined for heaven; they have both mind and senses; and though created, they are destined to share in the uncreated nature by deification. All the divisions of the cosmos are reflected in the human being, so the human being is a microcosm, a 'little cosmos' (a term Maximus does not use explicitly here, though he does elsewhere).[18] As microcosm, the human person is able to mediate between the extremes of the cosmos, he is a 'natural bond' *(physikos syndesmos),* and constitutes the 'great mystery of the divine purpose' (1305B). Maximus then develops this work of mediation. The first step is to transcend sexual division through 'the most dispassionate relationship to divine virtue'. As Maximus makes clear here and later on, the division of the sexes is not original or primordial. Maximus shares with Gregory of Nyssa a belief in the double creation of humankind: an original creation that transcends sexuality, and a second creation, embracing sexual division, that has been introduced, not *because of* the Fall, but with a view to the Fall, that will exploit this division and turn it into an opposition, even a warfare. Maximus does not believe in what the poet Amy Clampitt has called 'the archetypal cleft of sex'.[19] Second, by a 'way of life proper and fitting to the Saints', the human person unites paradise and the *oikoumenê* to make one earth. Then, by imitating by virtue the life of the angels, the human person unites heaven and earth. Then, by being able to perceive the *logoi* of the created order, the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible falls away. And finally, by uniting created nature with uncreated nature through love, the coinherence or interpenetration of God and the creation becomes apparent. These stages recapitulate the stages of the spiritual life as Maximus understands it. In other words, through accomplishing all the stages of the spiritual life, the human person

achieves, not simply union with God, but also fulfils what is the essentially human role of being the natural bond of all being, drawing the whole created order into harmony with itself, and into union with God.[20]

But because the human person has not ‘moved around the unmoved’ (1308C), but on the contrary has directed its power of movement towards lower creatures that are even less capable of stillness than itself, it has been sucked into the perpetual, unsatisfying movement of the fallen universe. Instead of holding in union what is divided, it has been the cause of separation of what is united. The universe is now characterized by fragmentation, disintegration—the corruption leading to death, of which we have seen St Athanasius had spoken. The only solution is the Incarnation, which introduces the unmoved into the midst of motion, and thus enables human beings to reorientate themselves. It is the Incarnation that now overcomes the five divisions: sexual division through the virginal conception, the division between paradise and the *oikoumenê* in the words from the cross to the repentant thief and in the resurrection appearances, that between heaven and earth in the event of the Ascension, that between the intelligible and the sensible by the enduring reality of the Ascension—the presence of the sacred humanity in heaven, and that between uncreated and created by his sitting at the right hand of the Father, that we confess in the Creed. ‘Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being’ (1312A). Through the Incarnation it is once again possible for human beings to fulfil their natural role as bond of creation and microcosm.[21]

THE COSMIC LITURGY[22]

This notion of the divisions of being occurs elsewhere in Maximus but it is given particular significance in the first part of his short work on the Eucharistic liturgy, his *Mystagogia*. This work falls into three parts: first, a series of chapters on the symbolism of the Church (meaning primarily, though not exclusively, the church building) (chapters 1–7); second, a series of chapters interpreting the successive ceremonies of the Byzantine liturgy of his day (chapters 8–21);[23] and finally three chapters that show how the movement of the liturgy provides an interpretation of the movement of the individual soul towards God.

In the introduction, the whole work is presented as something revealed to him by a ‘blessed old man’ as a complement to the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Denys the Areopagite. In that work Denys set his whole understanding of the liturgy (not just the Eucharistic

liturgy, but other Sacraments and sacramental rites— baptism, the consecration of sacred oil, ordination, admission to the monastic order, and the funeral service) against the background of his understanding of the cosmic order as a hierarchical reality, meaning by that (as we have seen), not so much a structure of rank and subordination, as a graded structure of reality in which each order mediates the divine glory and recalls other beings to unity with the divine. For Denys the cosmos is a community reaching from heaven to earth, in which each part fulfils its own role and so contributes to the good of the whole and of each part.[24] Maximus begins by asserting that he is taking a knowledge of the Dionysian understanding of the liturgy for granted and is not going to repeat anything said there (660D–661A). This is a little disingenuous as some of the interpretations Maximus puts forward constitute a fundamental revision of the Dionysian perspective. This is apparent in the very first chapter of the second part. Here Maximus gives an interpretation of the entry of the bishop into the church at the beginning of the liturgy (what is now the 'little entrance'): this represents 'the first coming into the world of the Son of God, our Saviour Christ, in the flesh' (688C). In contrast, Denys the Areopagite only ever speaks of the bishop coming out of the sanctuary into the body of the church and then returning to the sanctuary, and interprets this circuit of the way in which God in his goodness moves out into the multiplicity of the world and then returns, enfolding everything into unity. Denys sees a primordial circular movement, Maximus envisages a movement onwards towards a final rest. Denys is much closer to the pagan Neoplatonic view of reality as fundamentally circular (a view with which the Origenists concurred): Maximus, as we have seen, breaks with this by placing rest, not at the beginning but at the end, as the goal. This fundamental correction, both of Denys and Origen, must be kept in mind.

The first part of the *Mystagogia* presents a series of ways in which the church can be seen as symbolic. First, the Church (here primarily as a world-wide community, than as a building) is interpreted as an image of God, since both of them bring about union (*Myst.* 1: 664D-668C). The church building is then said to be an image of the cosmos, for as the church is divided into sanctuary and nave, so the cosmos is divided into the invisible and the visible. But this division is not a separation: it is a division within a unity. Nave and sanctuary are separated by being related; similarly the spiritual world is present in the world of the senses in symbols, and the world of the senses in the spiritual world in the *logoi* that constitute it (*Myst.* 2:668C–669D). Again the church is an image of the visible world, the distinction between sanctuary and nave being reflected in

the distinction between heaven and earth (*Myst.* 3:672A). Again the church is an image of the human being, the soul being the sanctuary, the body the nave, and the mind the altar within the sanctuary. Conversely the human being is a mystical church, the body 'radiant by virtue through the ascetic force of the soul', the soul a sanctuary in which the *logoi* of the senses are conveyed to God by reason, and the mind an altar on which 'he summons the silence abounding in song in the innermost recesses of the unseen and unknown utterance of divinity by another silence, rich in speech and tone' (*Myst.* 4:672A– C). Maximus then devotes a chapter to an elaborate account of how the church is an image of the soul considered in itself (*Myst.* 5:672D–684A). Then follow two chapters that explore other examples of division. First, the parallel between Holy Scripture and the human person: body/soul corresponds to Old Testament/New Testament (the New being the inner reality of the Old), and also to text/meaning (the meaning being the inner reality of the text) (*Myst.* 6:684A– D). Second, Maximus explores the parallels between what he calls three human beings: the cosmos, the Holy Scripture, and the human being 'who is ourselves' (*Myst.* 7:684D–688A).

There are two striking things about the divisions of being as presented here. First of all, as we have seen division is normally presented by Maximus as something negative ('indivisibly' is one of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs). Here, not so, or not apparently. In chapter 2, he makes it clear that the division between sanctuary and nave, between the invisible and the visible, is a matter of complementarity, not opposition. But in another way these divisions are not oppositions, for one term always stands higher than the other: the visible world points to the invisible world and in a way adumbrates it, similarly the nave and the sanctuary, or body and soul, or Old Testament and New Testament, or the text of Scripture and its meaning. These divisions are not separations, but representations of a tension, a tension which draws onwards and upwards—towards the final consummation.

> By holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from man to become God. For we believe that in this present life we already have a share in these gifts of the Holy Spirit through the love that is in faith, and in the future age after we have kept the commandments to the best of our ability we believe that we shall have a share in them in very truth in their concrete reality according to the steadfast hope of our faith and the solid and unchangeable promise to which God has committed himself. Then we shall pass from the grace which is in faith to the grace of

> vision, when our God and Saviour Jesus Christ shall indeed transform us into himself by taking away from us the marks of corruption and bestow on us the original mysteries which have been represented for us through sensible symbols here below.
>
> (*Myst.* 24:704D–705A)

What these divisions do is, it seems to me, to set up a set of echoing correspondences. Sanctuary/nave is reflected in invisible/visible, heaven/earth, soul/body, mind/reason, New Testament/Old Testament, meaning/text. So the movement between sanctuary and nave in the liturgy interprets and is interpreted by movement between the other divisions. There is still the circular movement—from sanctuary to nave and nave to sanctuary—that Denys celebrated, but it is subordinated to the movement from nave to sanctuary, from earth to heaven, towards our final rest in God, that undergirds Maximus' vision. The divisions cease to separate and fragment, and become a kind of ladder. So the liturgical movement celebrates the healing of the five divisions by the Incarnation as Maximus expounds it in *Amb.* 41, and the rhythm of the liturgy enables the participant to realize the healing power of divine grace. The divisions are not done away, rather they contribute to the multiplicity inevitable in creatures who are 'after God' (as Maximus often puts it): from isolating and diminishing, they come to represent the richness and diversity of God's creation. The movement between God and humankind in the Incarnation, ascetic struggle leading to contemplation as a healing of divisions within the human person and the cosmos, the liturgy as celebrating the mutual encounter between divine self-emptying and human deification: these are the themes Maximus draws together in his vision of the cosmic liturgy that is the reality of the humblest celebration of the divine liturgy.

Texts

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS

According to Anna Comnena, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I (Emperor: 1081–1118), founder of the Comnene dynasty, her mother, Irene, was fond of reading the works of St Maximus, 'the philosopher and martyr' (especially at mealtimes!). Anna found this strange, for, she said, 'the man's writing, so highly speculative and intellectual, makes the reader's head swim'. Challenged by her daughter, Irene replied, 'I myself do not approach such books without a tremble. Yet I cannot tear myself away from them. Wait a little and after a close look at other books, believe me, you will taste the sweetness of these' (Sewter 1969, 178–9). Maximus is, without any doubt, a difficult writer, at any rate when he begins to explain matters at length. His *Centuries* may be fairly straightforward, but once he allows himself to develop his ideas, his sentences become long and involved, and he seems positively shy of full-stops! Even the immensely learned Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century, found him 'unclear and difficult to interpret' (Henry 1962, 80). It is perhaps this that has deterred translators. But, as the Empress Irene said, in these works one will come to 'taste their sweetness': I hope there are not too many asperities in my English to disguise still further that sweetness.

The translated texts that follow more or less cover the whole of St Maximus the Confessor's writing career. The first is one of his early letters written from the monastery of St George in Cyzicus shortly before 626, and the last two are short works that belong to the period in the early 640s, when Maximus had come out against Monothelitism, before his departure for Rome in 646. Most of these translated texts are drawn from his *Ambigua,* his discussion of difficulties in the writings of St Gregory the Theologian (and one from the works of Denys the Areopagite).

These *Ambigua* exist in two distinct collections, one addressed to John, Bishop of Cyzicus, and the other to a certain Abbot Thomas, described as Maximus' 'spiritual father and teacher' (the two

collections are consequently often called the *Ambigua ad Joannem* and the *Ambigua ad Thomam*). The *Ambigua ad Joannem* are the earlier, to be dated to the very beginning of Maximus' African stay, that is 628–30; the *Ambigua ad Thomam* belong to 634 or shortly after, as it is clear from them that the Monenergist controversy has broken. As printed in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* (following the Greek manuscripts consulted for Oehler's edition), these two collections are printed together, the later placed—confusingly—before the earlier (in their joint enumeration the prefatory epistles to the dedicatees are not counted). This arrangement of the two collections appears to go back to Maximus himself, as in the first of the *opuscula* (645–6), he retracts an unfortunate monenergist phrase from what he calls 'the seventh chapter of the *Difficulties in the great Gregory'* (*Opusc.* 1:33A: this is the reading of all the Greek manuscripts).[1] The two collections must, however, have circulated separately, since the manuscript from which Eriugena translated the *Ambigua* in the ninth century contained only the earlier collection (which he enumerated counting the prefatory epistle as the first). It is, in fact, evident that the works of Maximus the Confessor were soon preserved as the works of one of the great Fathers of Orthodoxy (in Africa and Palestine, at least, if not for several centuries in Constantinople itself). Several of the letters and treatises have *scholia* appended to them (which are printed in the Migne text), which summarize the main points of the work: as these are unlikely to go back to Maximus, I have omitted them from my translation.

The *Ambigua,* or *Books of Difficulties,* are perhaps the most important source for Maximus' theological thinking. He was very fond of presenting his thought as a collection of propositions, especially in his *Centuries,* but in his *Difficulties* we can follow the route of his thinking. This is also true of the other works that have been translated here: his remarkable treatise of love (*Ep.* 2) and the two brief Christological treatises.

Each treatise has its own introduction, and also notes to elucidate the argument and the sources Maximus used. Like all the Fathers, the most important source for Maximus is the Bible: as well as quoting from the Bible, he very frequently alludes to it, and his allusions are often valuable in indicating the direction of his thought. For the Old Testament, the text of the Bible with which Maximus was familiar was the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint (the 'Seventy' (LXX), so called after the seventy elders who were thought to have made the translation in Ptolemaic Egypt in the third century BC). References to the books of the Old Testament are therefore to the Septuagint (of which there is, alas, no up-to-date English translation). Where this differs in a major way from the Hebrew Bible (the basis of

all modern English translations), I have indicated this. In the case of the Psalms, it needs to be remembered that the enumeration in the Hebrew Bible is usually one more than that of the Septuagint (which is the same as the Latin Vulgate).[2] The two books of Samuel and of Kings in the Hebrew Bible are the four books of Kingdoms in the LXX (so 1 Sam.=1 Kgd; and 1 Kgs=3 Kgd).

Maximus' other main source is the writings of earlier Fathers (he rarely seems to be using directly the works of pagan philosophers, even though he seems to have a good grasp of their teaching in many areas). Maximus' sources, and his use of them, are of considerable interest, since, as we have already seen, Maximus constitutes an important stage in the building up of this tradition of authorities: John of Damascus, whose collation of authorities has been most influential, both in the East and the West, was clearly guided in his choice by the use Maximus had made of the Fathers. I have done my best to identify Maximus' sources (and have been greatly assisted by the annotations to Jeauneau's edition of Eriugena's translation of the earlier *Ambigua*), but I am sure that I have overlooked many instances (Maximus rarely identifies his sources, though sometimes indicates that he is citing an authority by prefacing it with 'they say', or by referring it to 'the saints'). I have used what I hope are readily understandable references, and only given references to modern critical editions where it is a matter of close borrowing, and citation of a modern edition is necessary for locating the reference with any hope of success.[3]

I have used the text printed in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca,* vol. 91, except for the *opuscula,* where by the kindness of Professors C. Steel and B. Markesinis, I have been able to work from the text of the new (yet to be published) critical edition.

LETTER 2:
ON LOVE

INTRODUCTION

This letter is one of the earliest surviving works of St Maximus, written during his brief stay at the monastery of St George in Cyzicus which ended in 626 (letter 3, also to John, is in thanks for a gift to the monastery of St George). It is addressed to John the Cubicularius, a courtier in Constantinople. Like several other letters to John, it is in the second person plural, which suggests that it was written to a group (of courtiers?) in Constantinople who looked to Maximus as their spiritual father, a relationship that probably went back to Maximus' time as a monk at Chrysopolis, just over the Bosphorus from the capital, and had maybe grown out of friendships formed when Maximus was *protoasecretis* in the imperial court. The letter is an encomium of love, both spendidly expressed and profound in its teaching. As Maximus' first editor said, 'Truly this is Maximus at his best': *vere maximum agit Maximus* (*PG* 91:393D).

It needs little introduction. But a few points might be made. First, it is archetypally Maximus in its combination of philosophical learning and quite practical, and also demanding, spiritual teaching. Maximus uses philosophical terminology to develop his understanding of love, most strikingly, perhaps, in the very abstract definition of love he provides (401D). But his teaching is quite practical: however splendid a concept love is, its touchstone is care for one's neighbour (401D). Second, Maximus' teaching here is, compared with his later teaching, incautiously expressed: he uses language, about there being one will between God and human beings, that he will later retract (see 396C and n. 6). Finally, nonetheless, we find here Maximus' teaching in its characteristic breadth: at one pole is self-love, 'the first progeny of the devil and the mother of all passions' (397C), which cuts the human being off from God and from other human beings; at the other pole is deifying love, that breaks down all barriers, and transfigures the

human person, revealing the true glory of the image of God. In between, there is sketched an analysis of the passions that tear the human person apart, of the virtues that build it up again, and the way in which the Incarnation makes such restoration possible.

TEXT[1]

392D **To John the Cubicularius**

You, the God-protected ones, cleave through grace to holy love towards God and your neighbour and care about appropriate
393A ways of practising it. Already when I was present with you I had learnt, and now I am absent it is no less true, that you suffer those things that are, and are said, to belong to divine love, in order to possess this divine thing, which in its power is beyond circumscription or definition. For you not only do good to those who are present, but you long to do good to those who are absent, however great the distance in space, and thus on each occasion I learn of the greatness of the largess of your love both from what has come to pass amongst you, and also from your honoured words, in which I can see the form of the divine grace that has been imprinted in you, as in a mirror, so that I am gladdened and rejoice. And I give thanks for you to God, the giver of good things, and I do not cease to cry out
B with the Apostle, *Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places* (Eph. 1:3). For I know quite certainly that your holy soul is indissolubly bound to my wretchedness in the spirit through love, having the law of grace as a bond of friendship, in accordance with which you invisibly embrace me, making my sinful shamefulness vanish in comparison with your own excellence. For nothing is more truly Godlike than divine love, nothing more mysterious, nothing more apt to raise up human beings to deification. For it has gathered together in itself all good things that are recounted by the *logos* of truth in the form of virtue, and it has absolutely no relation to anything that has the form of wickedness, since it is the fulfilment of the law and the prophets.[2] For they were
C succeeded by the mystery of love, which out of human beings makes us gods, and reduces the individual commandments to a universal meaning *[logos]*. Everything is circumscribed by love according to God's good pleasure in a single form, and love is dispensed in many forms in accordance with God's economy.

For what form of good things does love not possess? Neither
faith, the first premiss in matters concerning true religion,
assuring the one who possesses it of the existence of God and of
divine matters, and that much more surely than the eye by
attending to the appearances of sensible things furnishes an
D opinion concerning them for those who see; nor hope, which
establishes the truly subsisting good, and that much more
effectively than the hand does to even the most solid of
material things that fall beneath its touch. For does not love
grant enjoyment of those things believed in and hoped for, by
itself making present the things to come? And what about
396A humility, the first foundation of the virtues, by which we
come to know ourselves and are able to throw off the vain
tumour of pride? Or meekness, through which we strike at
censures and praises, and on a kind of diameter between evils,
I mean glory and ignominy, drive away distress? Or
gentleness, by which, when suffering, we remain unaltered
towards those who do evil to us, not at all becoming disposed
to hostility? Or mercy, by which we willingly make our own
the misfortunes of others, and extend to them kinship and
fellow-feeling? What about self-control and patience, long-
suffering and kindness, peace and joy, by which we gently lull
to sleep passion[3] and desire, and their burning heat and
B fever? And simply, to speak briefly, love is the goal of every
good, being the highest of goods with God, and source of every
good. It leads forward those who walk in it, being faithful, and
infallible, and abiding.

For faith is the foundation of everything that comes after it,
I mean hope and love, and firmly establishes what is true.
Hope is the strength of the extremes, I mean faith and love, for
it appears as faithful by itself and loved by both, and teaches
through itself to make it to the end of the course. Love is the
C fulfilment of these, wholly embraced as the final last desire,
and furnishes them rest from their movement. For love gives
faith the reality of what it believes and hope the presence of
what it hopes for, and the enjoyment of what is present. Love
alone, properly speaking, proves that the human person is in
the image of the Creator, by making his self-determination[4]
submit to reason, not bending reason under it, and persuading
the inclination[5] to follow nature and not in any way to be at
variance with the *logos* of nature. In this way we are all, as it
were, one nature, so that we are able to have one inclination[6]
and one will with God and with one another, not having any
discord with God or one another, whenever by the law of

grace, through which by our inclination the law of nature is
D renewed, we choose what is ultimate.[7] For it is impossible for
those who do not cleave first to God through concord to be able
to agree with others in their inclination.

For since the deceitful devil at the beginning contrived by
guile to attack humankind through his self-love, deceiving him
through pleasure, he has separated us in our inclinations from
God and from one another, and turned us away from rectitude.
He has divided nature at the level of mode of existence,
fragmenting it into a multitude of opinions and imaginations.
He has set up the means through which each vice may be
397A discovered, and with time established a law, to which all our
powers are devoted, introducing into everything a wicked
support for the continuance of vice— namely, irreconcilable
inclinations. By this he has prevailed on humankind to turn
from the natural movement he once had and to move his
longing from what is permitted to what is forbidden. Thus
humankind has brought into being from itself the three
greatest, primordial evils, and (to speak simply) the begetters
of all vice: ignorance, I mean, and self-love and tyranny, which
are interdependent and established one through another. For
out of ignorance concerning God there arises self-love. And out
of this comes tyranny towards one's kin: of this there is no
doubt. For by the misuse of our own powers—reason, desire
and the incensive power—these evils are established. For
reason, instead of being ignorant, ought to be moved through
B knowledge to seek solely after God; and desire, pure of the
passion of self-love, ought to be driven by yearning for God
alone; and the incensive power, separated from tyranny, ought
to struggle to attain God alone. And the divine and blessed
love, which is fashioned from these and through which these
come to be, will embrace God and manifest the one who loves
God to be God himself. Since these have turned out evil,
because of man's own will and the devil's deceit with regard to
human beings, God, who made nature and wisely healed it
when it was sick through wickedness, through his love
towards us, *emptied himself, taking the form of a slave* (Phil. 2:
7), and without change[8] united himself to this [nature] hypo-
C statically. For our sake and from us and through us he
became wholly man to such a degree that unbelievers thought
that he was not God, while existing as God to such a degree
that to believers was granted the ineffable and true meaning
of reverent religion. In this way the works of the devil were
dissolved, and nature restored to its pure powers, and by again

bringing about union with him and of human beings with one
another, God renewed the power of love, the adversary of self-
love. This self-love is, and is known to be, the first sin, the first
progeny of the devil and the mother of the passions that come
after it. He to whom it is granted to be worthy of God through
love does away with it, and together with it the whole host of
wickedness, which has no other foundation or cause of
existence than self-love. For such a one no longer knows
D pride, the mark of that vain opinion that opposes God, the
monstrous, composite evil. He does not know the glory that
causes one to fall, and casts down from itself those who are
puffed up with it. He causes envy to waste away, which itself
first rightly lays waste those who possess it, through voluntary
goodwill making his own those who share the same nature.
Anger, bloodthirstiness, wrath, guile, hypocrisy, dissembling,
resentment, greed, and everything by which the one human
person is divided up: all these he roots up. For by plucking out
self-love, which is, as they say, the beginning and mother of all
evils, everything that comes from it and after it is plucked out
400A as well. Once this is no more, absolutely no form or trace of
evil can any longer subsist. All the forms of virtue are
introduced, fulfilling the power of love, which gathers together
what has been separated, once again fashioning the human
being in accordance with a single meaning and mode.[9] It levels
off and makes equal any inequality or difference in inclination
in anything, or rather binds it to that praiseworthy inequality,
by which each is so drawn to his neighbour in preference to
himself and so honours him before himself, that he is eager to
spurn any obstacle in his desire to excel. And for this reason
each one willingly frees himself from himself, by separating
himself from any thoughts or properties to which **B** he is
privately inclined, and is gathered to the one singleness and
sameness, in accordance with which nothing is in anyway
separated from what is common to all, so that each is in each,
and all in all, or rather in God and in others, and they are
radiantly established as one, having the one *logos* of being in
themselves, utterly single in nature and inclination. And in
this God is understood: in him they are all beheld together and
they are bound together and raised to him, as the source and
maker. The *logos* of being of all beings by nature preserves
itself pure and inviolate for our attention, who, with conscious
zeal through the virtues and the toils that accompany them,
have been purified from the passions that rebel against it.

C Perhaps it was this that great Abraham[10] achieved, restoring himself to nature's *logos* of being, or reason *[logos]* to himself, and through this being given back to God, and receiving God (I put it both ways, for both ways can be regarded as being true). As man he was made worthy to see God, and to receive him, since he lived naturally in accordance with the perfect natural *logos* through love for humankind.[11] He was led up to this, having relinquished the individuality of what divides and is divided, no longer leading another human being different from himself, but knowing all as one and one as all.[12] This is clearly not a matter of inclination, about which there is contention and division, while it remains irreconcilable with nature, but of nature itself. For it is in accordance with nature that the undeviating image is established, looking to the utterly singular reason *[logos],* by
D which we have established that God is certainly manifest, and through which God is set forth as good, making the creatures his own, since creation cannot know God from himself, as he is in himself. Nor is it likely that anything may be gathered to what is simple and the same which has become not the same as itself nor simple, but by inclination is still divided from nature into many parts, unless first through love for
401A humankind the inclination embraces nature, and there is manifest from both an inner meaning *[logos],* peaceful and undisturbed, not at all primarily moved to any of those things that are after God.[13] In accordance with this, nature remains undamaged and undivided in those that have received this grace, not divided up into the differences introduced by inclination in the many. For no longer are different things drawn to this and that, thus dividing nature, but they all continue with the same, none of them directed by their own inclination, so that they are divided into separate parts, but all directed to what is common and undivided in all things at the level of nature, thus drawing together what has been separated, so that nothing of what is divided is drawn in against itself. God is thus manifest in those who possess [this grace], taking shape according to the specific character of the virtue of
B each through love for humankind, and condescending to be named from humankind. For it is the most perfect work of love and the goal of its activity, to contrive through the mutual exchange of what is related that the names and properties of those that have been united through love should be fitting to each other. So the human being is made God, and God is called and appears as human, because of the one and undeviating

wish (in accordance with the will) and movement of both, as we find in the case of Abraham and the other saints. And this is perhaps what is meant when it is said in the person of God, *I have been likened in the hands of the prophets* (Hos. 11 [LXX]): God takes form in each, through his great love for humankind, out of the virtue that is present in each through the ascetic struggle. For the 'hand' of each just man: that is his ascetic struggle in accordance with virtue, in which and through which God receives his likeness to human beings.

C Love is therefore a great good, and of goods the first and most excellent good, since through it God and man are drawn together in a single embrace, and the creator of humankind appears as human, through the undeviating likeness of the deified to God in the good so far as is possible to humankind. And the interpretation of love is: to love the Lord God with all the heart and soul and power, and the neighbour as oneself.[14] Which is, if I might express it in a definition, the inward
D universal relationship to the first good connected with the universal purpose of our natural kind. Other than this there is nothing that can make the human being who loves God ascend any higher, for all other ways of true religion are subordinate to it. This we know as love and so we call it, not divisively assigning one form of love to God and another to human beings, for it is one and the same and universal: owed to God and attaching human beings one to another. For the activity and clear proof of perfect love towards God is a genuine
404A disposition of voluntary goodwill towards one's neighbour. *For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,* says the divine Apostle John, *cannot love God whom he has not seen* (1 John 4:20). This is the way of truth, as the Word of God calls himself,[15] that leads those who walk in it, pure of all passions, to God the Father. This is the door,[16] through which the one who enters finds himself in the Holy of Holies, and is made worthy to behold the unapproachable beauty of the holy and royal Trinity. This is the true vine, in which he who is firmly rooted is made worthy of becoming a partaker of the divine quality.[17] Through this love, all the teaching of the law and the prophets and the Gospel both is and is proclaimed, so that we who have a desire for ineffable goods may confirm our
B longing in these ways. For the sake of Him for whom we long we honour what he has fashioned as much as if the fashioner himself were present: the *logos* of nature demands as much, and legislates for them as of equal honour, cutting off from nature any preconceived inequality that is manifest in any

particular thing, and embracing everything within itself in accordance with the one power of sameness.

Because of this, the Creator of nature himself—who has ever heard of anything so truly awesome!—has clothed himself with our nature, without change[18] uniting it hypostatically to himself, in order to check what has been borne away, and gather it to himself, so that, gathered to himself, our nature
C may no longer have any difference from him in its inclination. In this way he clearly establishes the all-glorious way of love, which is truly divine and deifying and leads to God. Indeed, love is said to be God himself,[19] which from the beginning the thorns[20] of self-love have covered up: in this prefiguring the passions that have overwhelmed us and from which obstacles he has granted us freedom. He has also through his apostles scattered the stones that lay in this way, as he announced beforehand in his prophets, saying, *And he scattered the stones from the way* (Isa. 62:10). In this he persuades us to cling to himself and to one another, as he has set before us himself as an example when he accepted to suffer for our sake. For the
D sake of love the saints all resist sin continually, finding no meaning in this present life, and enduring many forms of death, that they may be gathered to themselves from this world to God, and unite in themselves the torn fragments of nature. This is the true and blameless divine wisdom[21] of the faithful, the goal of which is the good and the truth. For it is good to love humankind and right to love God in accordance with faith. These are the marks of love, which binds human beings to God and to one another, and therefore possesses an unfailing continuance of good things.

You, who have become blessed and most genuine lovers of this divine and blessed way, fight the good fight until you
405A reach the end, clinging fast to those qualities that will assure your passage to love's goal. I mean: love of humankind, brotherly and sisterly love, hospitality, love of the poor, compassion, mercy, humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, freedom from anger, long-suffering, perseverance, kindness, forbearance, goodwill, peace towards all. Out of these and through these the grace of love is fashioned, which leads one to God who deifies the human being that he himself fashioned. For *love,* says the divine Apostle, or rather Christ, speaking these things through him, *is long-suffering and kind, not jealous or boastful, is not puffed up or rude, and does not insist on its own way, is not irritable, does not think evil, nor rejoice*
B *in injustice, but rejoices in the truth. Love endures all things,*

believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4–8), since it possesses God who is alone unfailing and unalterable. Love works in such a way in those who live in accordance with it, that it approves of you, saying through the prophet Jeremiah, *I say to you, this is the way*[22] *of my commandments, and the law that endures for ever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. Take her, my child, and walk towards the shining of her light. Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people. Blessed are you, because you know what is*
C *pleasing to God. Learn where there is sagacity, where there is strength, where there is understanding, where there is length of days, and life, where there is light for the eyes and peace,* and I have come to you in the way, *and appeared to you from afar.* Therefore, *I have loved you with an everlasting love, and in pity I have had mercy on you, and I will build you, and you shall be built, and you shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers, that you may stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the eternal paths of the Lord,* and you will know *where the good way is, and walk in it, and find sanctification for your soul.*[23] And again through Isaiah: *I am the Lord your God, who leads you in the way of righteousness, in which you should go, and you have heard my commandments.* Therefore, *your peace*
D *has become like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea* (Isa. 48:17–18). And I, rejoicing at your goodness, dare to say with God, in the words of the great Jeremiah, Blessed are you, because *you have taken off the garment of your sorrow and affliction,* I mean *the old man, which is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God,* I mean *the new man, created* in the spirit
408A in accordance with Christ *after the image of the Creator, and put on the robe of righteousness from God, and on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting,*[24] that is, adorned with the stable mode of the virtues and the infallible *logos* of wisdom. Therefore, *God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven, and your name will be called Peace of righteousness and Glory of godliness* (Bar. 5:3–4).

I have no more words to manifest the secret disposition of your soul. For I have nothing worth mentioning alongside your good things that I can offer to God and to you, except to wonder mightily at you, and approve your good deeds, and rejoice that your good works draw down the mercy of God, and through you praise virtue, and through virtue hymn God, for virtue has united you to God. For it seems to me to be right

and the same thing, to praise you and virtue and to raise up
B hymns to God, who has granted to you the splendour of virtue, which deifies you by grace, by sublimating your human characteristics. In you virtue also makes God condescend to be human, by your assumption, so far as is possible for humans, of divine properties.

DIFFICULTY 10

INTRODUCTION

This is much the longest *Difficulty* in the earlier collection. It proceeds, by way of a discussion of a passage from St Gregory Nazianzen's *Sermon* 21, a panegyric of St Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria and defender of Nicene orthodoxy, who died in 373, to constitute one of the most wide-ranging discussions of Maximus' theological ideas. Because of its wide scope, it gives us a glimpse of the kind of things Bishop John of Cyzicus and Maximus discussed among themselves— interpretations of scriptural passages, problems raised by the ideas current among the Origenist monks, and a whole series of philosophical ideas, mainly concerned with the constitution of the human person and meaning of God's providence—all of this bearing on their deepest concern, love and knowledge of God and union with him in a transforming vision.

Because of its length, we get a glimpse, too, of how Maximus' mind worked. The movement of his mind is that of one who ponders and meditates, patiently drawing together all sorts of apparently diverse concerns. It is what is sometimes called 'lateral thinking', i.e. his mind does not move straight ahead in conformity to a linear, logical argument, rather it moves sideways, and gathers together a collection of considerations that are gradually made to converge.

Maximus' concern in this difficulty is primarily with the danger that the passage from Gregory might be misinterpreted to sanction the notion that the mind can reach God through reason alone, without the necessity of any engagement in ascetic struggle, or *praktikê*. How this might relate to the Origenism of Maximus' day has been discussed above.[1] Maximus starts by rejecting this idea directly, and finds in the text of Gregory support for his insistence on the essential importance of ascetic struggle. He finds this support in Gregory's describing the 'fleshly' as a 'cloud or veil'. For the imagery of cloud or

veil describes for Maximus the experience of engagement with all that hides God: in short, it describes the experience of ascetic struggle. Maximus explores this in the first sections, as he discusses how the soul operates and of what its relationship to the body consists (sections 1–3).

But the ideas of contemplation and the cloud have already brought to Maximus' mind the Transfiguration of Christ, when the disciples beheld the radiant glory of the divinity of their Lord, and a bright cloud overshadowed Him (see Matt. 17:1–8 and parallels). In the account of the Transfiguration (and in icons, too: the earliest known icon of the Transfiguration is from about the time of Maximus' birth; it is still in the monastery of St Catherine at Sinai), Christ appears transfigured together with the figures of the great prophets of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah. In this event the Old and the New Testaments meet: the prophets bear witness to Christ's glory, which is beheld by the apostles. It is the Transfiguration, and all that it implies, that is at the heart of Maximus' tenth *Difficulty*. At the end of section 3, in his account of how the soul, having passed beyond the cloud, escapes to intellectual contemplation, Maximus recalls the place of the cloud in the escape, under Moses' leadership, of the people of Israel from Egypt, and this leads to a long series of meditations (or contemplations) on events from the Old Testament concerned with passing over, or passing beyond—to contemplation of God. Here we encounter quite directly the lateral movement of Maximus' mind. Thirteen short sections (sections 4–16) explore the preparation in the Old Testament for the divine manifestation of the Transfiguration (section 17).

In the Transfiguration itself we behold, not just Christ transfigured, but also his garments which contain his human presence. These garments can be interpreted either as Scripture or as the works of creation: a dual interpretation Maximus sees indicated in the two figures Moses (who received the written law, already discussed in section 5) and Elijah (to whom God revealed himself through the works of creation: 3 Kgd 19:9ff., already discussed in section 12). This leads Maximus to demonstrate the unity of the natural and the written law (section 18), and then, in section 19, to discuss natural contemplation, the contemplation of God in created nature (in this section, in particular, he picks up and corrects some Origenist errors concerning the cosmos). All this is explored in a long series of meditations, especially of Melchisedec (the priest-king of Salem of Genesis 14:18–20, whose superiority to Abraham demonstrates his transcendence of the written law, as Heb. 7 argues) and Moses. Section 31 returns to the Transfiguration itself, with a series of brief meditations, which include a striking Christological

interpretation of the Dionysian opposition of cataphatic and apophatic theology.[2]

Then after a couple of meditations on the final consummation (implicit in the Transfiguration itself, and especially in St Luke's mentioning that the prophets spoke to Christ of the 'exodus' he was to accomplish in Jerusalem: Luke 9:31), there follows a long series of discussions of metaphysical topics concerned with God's relationship to the cosmos, in particular, his providence (sections 34–42). On the one hand, these sections are heavily dependent on a work by the fourth-century Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa, and on the other, they are picked up by a seventh/eighth century Palestinian monk, St John of Damascus, in his summary of Orthodox Theology, called the *Exposition of the Faith.* Providence, in particular, was a major concern of Byzantine theology, and Maximus takes his place in a long line of reflection on this topic.

In section 43, Maximus seems to remember that the text from Gregory that was the occasion of this *Difficulty* also had difficult words about passing beyond the material dyad to the Trinity. Already in his metaphysical section he had discussed the monad and the dyad (section 41), and it is a topic that engaged him elsewhere (e.g., *Amb.* 1, from the later set of *Difficulties,* translated below). His concluding sections return to further analysis of the soul that is important for understanding ascetic struggle, the necessary foundation of any transfiguring vision of God: this is explored in several meditations on passages from the Old Testament, and two from the Gospels.

This very long *Difficulty* is divided up into sections with headings both in the text as given in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* and also in Eriugena's translation. I have kept these sections, mainly using the more concise headings given by Eriugena in his index.[3]

TEXT

1105C From the same sermon:

If therefore it happens to anyone that, passing by means of reason and contemplation through matter and the fleshly, whether called cloud or veil, to become assimilated to God and united to the most pure light, so far as is permitted to
D human nature, this person is blessed by his ascent from here and his deification there, which is granted to those who genuinely live the philosophical life and transcend the material dyad through the unity the mind perceives in the Trinity.[4]

1
Introduction

1108A I do not think that I possess defectively the word of the teacher handed down about the virtue of the Saints, and if, as you wrote, there are some who think this, saying that the divine philosophy belongs to those who pass over by reason and contemplation alone without ascetic struggle, I on the contrary dare to define as solely the truly fully satisfactory philosophy that true judgment concerning reality and activity, supported by ascetic struggle, or rather I undertake to introduce reason, manifested as correcting [philosophy] by reason and contemplation, as ascetic struggle is certainly connected to reason, and the judgment it involves embraced by contemplation. For the movement of the body is ordered by reason, which by correct thinking restrains, as by a bridle,
B any turning aside towards what is out of place, and the rational and sensible choice of what is thought and judged is reckoned to contemplation, like a most radiant light manifesting truth itself through true knowledge. By these two especially every philosophical virtue is created and protected and by them is manifest through the body, though not wholly. For philosophy is not limited by a body, since it has the character of divine power, but it has certain shadowy reflections, in those who have been stripped through the grace of philosophy to become imitators of the godlike conduct of God-loving men. Through participation in the Good they too have put off the shamefulness of evil to become worthy of being portions of God, through assistance they needed from those empowered, and having received it they make manifest
C in the body through ascetic struggle the virtuous disposition that is hidden in the depth of the soul. So they become all things to all men and in all things make present to all the providence of God, and thus are a credit to the God-loving men. If there were no-one who needed to suffer or stood in need of an example to show him what virtue was, everyone would be completely sufficient for himself and arrayed with the graces of the virtues in his soul. But it is not absurd to say that this is not the case apart from such virtues being demonstrated manifestly through the body. He who acquires comprehension devoutly through contemplation, it is as if he possessed reality, with a rational will defining the reason of things accurately and correctly, keeping the judgment for himself, or

rather keeping himself unimpaired in judgment. For he con-
D ceives virtue as a whole, and following the truth brought to knowledge is moved towards nothing else. In zeal he passes beyond everything else, accomplishing the absolute meaning *[logos]* of none of those things that belong to the flesh or the world, since he has already within effortlessly embraced by reason the ascetic struggle that among us belongs to the mind. In this he bears all the excellent and dispassionate meanings [of things], in accordance with which all virtue and knowledge is and consists, as powers of the rational soul, which are not wholly there for the body's sake, nor do they disown the
1109A purpose of manifesting the causes already mentioned at the proper time. For they say[5] that to the mind belong the understandings of things intelligible, the virtues, the capacity of knowledge, the art of discourse, choice, will, and in general judgments, assents, excuses, impulses, and whatever belongs solely to intellectual contemplation, as well as what belongs to the rational power of knowing. If the Saints keep their own lives guarded with these, then this blessed man with comprehension, through reason and contemplation, was introduced to everything rational in accordance with virtue and knowledge that he has received from the Saints. They devoted themselves sensibly and with knowledge to the understanding of God. In accordance with reason, through the
B virtues, they form in contemplation a conception of the divine form for themselves. They did not think that it was necessary to name ascetic struggle in the body, for they knew that it does not create virtue, but simply manifests it, and is the servant only of divine conceptions and thoughts. Perhaps this can be made clear in another way:[6] those who concern themselves with what is real for us and pursue with precision the meanings of what is rational say that the rational is either contemplative or practical. The contemplative is what is in accordance with the intellect and possesses reality, while the practical is a matter of will, defining the right reason among things to be done. They call the contemplative intellect, the practical reason, the contemplative wisdom, the practical sagacity. If this is true, practice is fundamentally concerned with what is probable, and the teacher does not name the
C meaning sought from the underlying reality but calls it a habit having nothing opposed to it. For the contemplative cleaves to truths rationally and with knowledge, not with effort and struggle, and apart from these he refuses to see anything else because of the pleasure that he has in them. If it is necessary

to make this plainer in another way, again those who have exercised themselves in the reasons of the perfection of virtue say that those who have not yet become pure, sharing in matter through their relation to it, and busying themselves with practical things, still having their judgment of reality mixed up with them, are changeable, for they have not yet relinquished their relationship to what is changeable. Those who have been drawn into the closest possible relationship to God, and through understanding of Him have born the fruit of blessedness, and are turned towards themselves alone and
D God, have completely withdrawn from the bonds of practical activity and matter by a sincere breaking with material relationships, and adapted themselves to contemplation and to God. Therefore, they say, they remain changeless, no longer having any relationship with the material. For one who is ruled by matter necessarily comes to change in a way contrary to nature along with matter which is itself naturally
1112A changeable. Seeing that great power is needed for the renunciation of material inclination on the part of one who wishes to be freed from it, the teacher says, 'To whomever therefore it happens that, passing by means of reason and contemplation through matter and the fleshly, whether it is to be called cloud or veil, to become assimilated to God, etc.'

2
On the cloud and the veil

Why does the teacher say that the flesh is a cloud and a veil? He knows that every human mind has gone astray and lost its natural motion, so that its motion is determined by passion and sense and things perceived by the senses, and it cannot be moved anywhere else as its natural motion towards God has
B completely atrophied. He therefore divides the flesh into passion and sense, designating these two parts of the ensouled flesh cloud and veil. For the cloud is the fleshly passion darkening the pilot of the soul, and the veil is the deceit of the senses, causing the soul to be overcome by the appearance of things perceived by the senses, and blocking the passage to intelligible reality, through which it is overcome by forgetfulness of natural goodness and turns all its energy to sensible things and also discovers in this way angry passions, desires and unseemly pleasures.

C (2b On pleasure)

Every forbidden pleasure has come to be through passion aroused through the senses by some object of sense. For pleasure is nothing else than a kind of feeling formed in the sense organ by something perceived through the senses, or a form of sensible energy constituted by an irrational desire. For desire added to sensual feeling changes into pleasure, giving it a shape, and sensual feeling moved by desire produces pleasure when it is applied to some object of sense. The Saints therefore know that the soul, when it is moved contrary to nature through the means of flesh towards matter, is clothed in an earthly form, but when, in contrast, it is moved naturally by means of the soul towards God, they are disposed to adapt
D the flesh in a seemly way to God, through the ascetic practice of the virtues adorning [the soul], as far as possible, with divine splendours.

3
On the motions of the soul

[The Fathers,] illuminated by grace, [teach] that the soul has three kinds of motions[7] that converge into one: that of the mind, that of reason, and that of sense. The [first] is a simple and inexplicable motion, according to which the soul, moved in an unknowable way close to God, knows Him in a transcendent way that has nothing to do with any of the
1113A things that exist. The [second] is motion in accordance with the defining cause of something unknown, according to which, moved naturally, the soul applies its powers of knowing to all the natural reasons of those things that are known only with reference to cause,[8] which are the forms. The [third] is composite motion, according to which, affected by things outside as by certain symbols of things seen, the soul gains for itself some impression of the meaning of things. In a noble manner, by these [motions] [the Fathers] pass beyond this present age of trials in accordance with the true and immutable form of [each] natural motion, so that they make sense, which possesses the spiritual reasons of things perceived through the senses, ascend by means of reason up to mind, and, in a singular way, they unite reason, which possesses the meanings of beings, to mind in accordance with
B one, simple and undivided sagacity. Thus they raise the mind, freed and pure of any motion around any existing thing and at rest in its own natural activity, to God, so that in this way it is wholly gathered to God, and made wholly worthy through the

Spirit of being united with the whole Godhead, for it bears the whole image of the heavenly, so far as is humanly possible, and draws down the divine splendour to such a degree, if it is permitted to say this, that it is drawn to God and united with Him. For they say that God and man are paradigms one of another, that as much as God is humanized to man through love for mankind,[9] so much is man able to be deified to God through love, and that as much as man is caught up by God to what is known in his mind, so much does man manifest God,
C who is invisible by nature, through the virtues. By this philosophy consisting of both reason and contemplation, according to which the nature of the body is necessarily ennobled, the Saints, turning unerringly with a yearning for God, worthily draw near to God through natural reflections of the divine indwelling in them, holding apart body and the world in ascetic struggle, beholding these things that contain each other, the one by nature, the other by perceiving it, and subordinating the one to the other, by such properties according to which one fits into the other, neither of them, by its own nature, being free from circumscription, and leading what is shameful in the soul to be corrupted and circum
D scribed by the mortal and circumscribed, while binding indissolubly the immortal and ever-moving to the only immortal God, who transcends every infinity, in no way surrendering to the contrary motions of the world and the flesh. This is the fulness of all virtue and knowledge, indeed I would say that it is its end. But if, however, the Saints are moved by visions of beings, they are not moved, as with us, in a material way principally to behold and know those things, but in order to praise in many ways God, who is and appears
1116A through all things and in all things, and to gather together for themselves every capacity for wonder and reason for glorying. For having received from God a soul having mind and reason and sense, so that it can range from the sensible to the intelligible, just as reason ranges from what is inward to what is expressed, and mind takes that which is capable of feeling into the realm of the intelligible, it is necessary that they should think about the activities of these, so as to apply them not to their own purposes, but to God. (That which is capable of feeling is what they call the imagination of the living being. For living things know themselves and us and the places where they dwell, and the wise say that such things constitute a sense, imagination being the organ by which it can be receptive of what it imagines.) Instructed by an accurate

knowledge of the nature of things, we learn that there are
B three general ways, accessible to human beings, in which God has made all things—for giving us existence He has constituted it as being, well being and eternal being—and the two ways of being at the extremes are God's alone, as the cause, while the other one in the middle, depending on our inclination[10] and motion, through itself makes the extremes what they are, properly speaking, for if the middle term is not present and 'well' is not added, the extremes are designated in vain, and the truth that is in the extremes cannot otherwise accrue to them or be preserved, or even come to be, if the well being in the middle is not mixed in with the extremes, or rather intended by eternal movement towards God. And then
C they are to intensify the soul's sight by natural reason, for it is wrong to invert the natural activities, because the abuse of natural powers necessarily signifies corruption. Hearing reason crying out directly, they are taught by appropriate natural reason to be borne towards [the soul's] cause, that thence for them being may simply be, and that they may receive the addition of true being. For those who think about these things fairly say, why should the gain be to that cause that does not cause itself at the level of being but is moved towards itself or another by God, when nothing is able to procure from itself or from any other than God anything for the meaning of its existence? Therefore they teach the mind to
D concern itself with God alone and His virtues, and to cast itself with unknowing into the ineffable glory of His blessedness; reason to become the interpreter of things intelligible and a singer of hymns, and to reason rightly about the forms that bring things to unity; sense ennobled by reason to imagine the different powers and activities in the universe and to communicate, so far as possible, the meanings that are in beings to the soul. With this teaching through mind and reason, they are to guide the soul wisely, like a ship, so that it passes dryshod[11] along this life's path, which is fluid and unstable, borne this way and that and swamped by the senses.

1117A

4
On the crossing of the sea[12]

Thus, perhaps, that great man, Moses, by a blow of all-powerful reason, symbolized doubtless by the rod, drove through the deceit of the senses, symbolized by the sea—or, perhaps better, circumvented it—and provided for the people, who were eagerly pursuing the divine promises, a firm and

unshakeable land under their feet. In this way he showed, I think, that the nature that is beneath the senses can be contemplated and easily described by right reason, and, to the life that is adorned by the virtues, is accessible and easy to cross and presents no danger to those who cross it thus from the seething impulses of the divided waters on either side, and their obscuring effect. If the break-up of mutual, rational coherence by evils, opposed to the virtues by lack or B excess, is what sublime reason discerns in the waters of the intelligible sea, then the one who cleaves to them [*sc.* evils] in his heart will in no way be allowed to be united with those who are hastening earnestly after God.

5
Contemplation of Moses on the mountain[13]

So again Moses followed God who called him, and, passing beyond everything here below, entered into the cloud, where God was,[14] that is, into the formless, invisible and bodiless state, with a mind free from any relationship to anything other than God. Having come into this state, in so far as human nature is worthy of it, he receives, as a worthy prize for that blessed ascent, knowledge encompassing the genesis of
C time and nature, and, having made God Himself the type and paradigm of the virtues, he modelled himself on Him, like a picture preserving beautifully the copy of the archetype, and came down the mountain. Because of his participation in glory, his face shone with grace to all men, so that having himself become a figure of the Godlike figure, he gave and displayed without envy, and he did this by expounding to the people what he had seen and heard, and handing on to those with him in writing the mysteries of God as a kind of divinely-given inheritance.

6
Contemplation of the dough of the unleavened loaves[15]

So the people, when they were led out of Egypt by Moses, took the dough needed for their food into the desert. For it is necessary, I think, to guard the power of reason within us pure and unharmed from entanglement with things perceived by the senses. He taught them then to flee the realm of the senses, and to journey hiddenly to the intelligible world, so

that through virtue and knowledge they might already in inclination become what through hope we believe is the destiny of those who are worthy in the world of incorruption.

7
Contemplation of the crossing of the Jordan[16]

D So Jesus,[17] Moses' successor—to pass over for the sake of the people most of the things that are told about him—took on a people who, in the desert, had been educated to piety in many ways. After Moses' death, he sanctified them by a strange form of circumcision with swords of stone,[18] and led all the people dryfoot across the Jordan which had dried up at the approach of the ark. In this he clearly prefigures the Saviour, the Word,
1120A who after the death of the letter of the legal ordinances receives the leadership of the true Israel that sees God[19] to take them up to the heights of intelligible reality. By circumcising them by the sharpest word [reason] of faith in Him from every defilement of soul and body, and freeing them from all the reproaches of those who incite to sin, He causes the unstable nature of time and moving things to pass to the state of the bodiless beings, and held floating on the shoulders of the virtues the knowledge that is able to receive the divine mysteries.

8
Contemplation of fall of Jericho[20]

B So again by seven encirclements and as many trumpets he [Jesus, son of Navê] threw down with a secret shout the city of Jericho which was difficult to conquer or even unconquerable. In this he secretly pointed to the very Word of God, as conqueror of the world and perfecter of the age, by mind and reason, as well as knowledge and virtue. Of this the ark and the trumpets are types, and to those who follow him the realm of the senses is shown to be easily conquered and overcome, containing nothing fit for the delight of those who love what is divine, since it is joined to death and corruption and a cause of divine anger. And Achar,[21] the son of Charmi, shows how troubling trains of thought that love the material, besides establishing within something of the sensible realm, draw down that pitiable death according to the divine decree, which
C reason works in the depths of the wicked conscience, strangling any worthy of such vengeance.

9
Contemplation of the fall of Tyre

So again, as it is written, *at that time he [Jesus] seized Assor*[22] *and killed its king with the sword, destroying every living thing in it, which formerly had been the ruler of all the regions* (Jos. 11:10), it is taught what mysteries are set before us in these words. Our true Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has destroyed the wicked powers and given to those worthy the inheritance of grace, since in the time of His Incarnation He seized sin through the cross and killed its king, the devil, by
D the word of his power (for sin had ruled over all from the beginning), and destroyed every living thing belonging to it, that is the passions that are within us, and the shameful and wicked thoughts connected with them, in order that sin might no longer in any way influence the life and movement of those who are Christ's and live in accordance with Him.

1121A

10
Contemplation of: *The heavens declare the glory of God* (Psa. 18:1)

So David, who was after the Judges in time, though their contemporary in the spirit—if I may pass over the Judges whose lives contain many mysteries—heard the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaim itself the work of his hands (a miracle! as the Creator placed no soul in them[23]). He thus received theological understandings *[logoi]* of the mind from what he heard from beings without soul, and of providence and judgment[24] from its full completion, so far as it is permitted for humans, and was taught, without attaining understanding, the ways in which the arrangement of the universe is various in its parts.

11
Contemplation of: M*y father and my mother forsake me* (Psa. 26:10)

B So again: *My father and my mother forsake me, but the Lord receives me.* This says that the judgment according to the senses of the natural, fleshly law of change and corruption, according to which we are all begotten and continue in being through transgression, and of the mother who gave us birth, are for those who secretly desire incorruptible reality

necessarily to be interpreted, I think, as deficiency and a means of escape. By these the visible world is passed by and abandoned, and the Lord receives those worthy of the spiritual law of adoption, and becomes their adopted father, and in his goodness concedes all of what He is wholly to these according to the likeness through virtue and knowledge. Or perhaps
C through father and mother the written law and the bodily worship that it commends are hinted at, by retreat from which the light of the spiritual law is made to dawn in the hearts of those who are worthy, and they are given freedom from the slavery of the law.

12
Contemplation of Elijah's vision at Horeb[25]

So Elijah is shown to be most wise after the fire and the earthquake and the wind that rent the mountains, which I take to be zeal, and discernment, and an eager, assured faith. For discernment utterly alters the ingrained habit of evil, assaulting it through virtue, like an earthquake breaking up what is held together. And zeal, burning like fire, enkindles
D those who have it to persuade the wicked by the warmth of the spirit. And faith, in the form of a compelling wind, forces the insensible to purification for the sake of God's glory through demonstration of the most lasting miracles and gives the truly faithful man guidance through hidden water and deifying
1124A fire. By it the famine of ignorance is cured, and those who sacrifice to God by custom are kindly dealt with. By it the teachers of evil—the trains of thought and the demons of sophistry —are put to death, and those under the slavery of the passions set free. After all these, by the gentle breeze, the voice in which God existed, Elijah was secretly taught that state of being, beyond any speech or demonstration, which is, by the utterance of reason and by forms of life and conduct, divine, untroubled, peaceful, completely immaterial, simple and free from every shape or form. Therefore, wondering at its glory and wounded by its beauty, he longs to emulate it rather than just pursue it, that is to fight for truth's sake everything that is opposed to it, and judges it much more honourable to see or know nothing that is opposed to the only God who is
B wholly through all and in all. While still in the flesh, he is preserved in that state, passing through matter by the divine chariot[26] of the virtues, treating it as a veil through which the mind finds a pure passage to the intelligible realm, and

finding the flesh [simply] a cloud, darkening through its passions the pilot of the soul, so that he might become a partaker of those ineffable things that he desires, so far as that is possible to one still bound to flesh subject to corruption, and become a firm assurance for us of those things that are promised. For through all these things that with a secret meaning were wordlessly enacted, God cries out, setting this before him, that to be with God alone in peace is more profitable that any other good.

C

13
Contemplation of Elisha[27]

So Elijah's disciple and spiritual successor, Elisha, no longer possessed senses that were controlled in their activity by material imaginations, but he had already passed to the graces of the Spirit in the mind. For he saw around him the divine powers opposed to the wicked powers with another activity of his eyes and was able to grant his companion to see that this power was stronger than weakness, that is, the flesh, by means of which the spirits of wickedness invade the clear-sighted mind, and even more possess the soul, around which the phalanxes of angels pitch their camps and lay siege to the royal image.[28] All this he both was taught and taught to others.

D

14
Contemplation of Anna and Samuel[29]

So the blessed Anna, the mother of the great Samuel, being barren and childless, asked God for the fruit of the womb, and fervently promised to give back to God who had given it the baby she was to be given by making him a servant in the temple. The secret teaching of this is that every soul must be barren of fleshly pleasures through being sown by God with the seeds of virtue, so that, conceiving in the mind and giving birth to reason obedient to God, it might be able to bring forth the power to see with knowledge what is in front of it, through
1125A a religious attention to contemplation. So that judging nothing its own, as a great and precious obligation, everything is referred to God who gives and receives. As it says in the law, *My gifts, my presents, my offering of fruit, take care to offer to me* (Num. 28:2), since every good thing originates from Him and is destined for Him. For the Word of God belongs to those

who have denied the movements of the flesh and set aside the soul's inclination towards them, and are filled with all true power of discernment.

15
Contemplation of the unclean house[30]

For when I hear about the priest who, according to the legal
B dispensation, enters into a house that is unclean in any way, and demands what is necessary for the purification of the possessions, I think that this signifies reason, the high priest, entering into the soul after the manner of the purest light, and uncovering the polluted wishes and thoughts and the blameworthy acts, and wisely proposing the ways of conversion and purification. And that is, I think, more clearly signified by the woman who received the great prophet, Elisha, saying, *Man of God, you have come to me to remind me of my wrongdoings* (3 Kgd 17:18).

16
Contemplation of Elisha and the widow of Sarepta[31]

C For every soul, widowed of good things and become a desert of virtue and knowledge of God, when it receives divine reason, powerful in discernment, comes to knowledge of its sins and is taught how with loaves of virtue to support the nourishing word, and to give the fountain of life to drink with the dogmas of truth, and to prefer care for reality to reality itself. In this way the stone vessel of flesh will minister to the practical harmony of the virtues, and the basket of the mind will continually flow with contemplation that carefully preserves the light of knowledge, and natural reason, like the son of the widow, will put aside the former life bound up with the passions and be made worthy to become a partaker of the divine and true life that is reason's gift.

D

17
Contemplation of the Transfiguration of the Lord[32]

So also we read that it happened to certain of Christ's disciples that together with Him they ascended and were lifted up by Him to the mountain of His manifestation because of their

diligence in virtue. There they beheld Him transfigured, unapproachable because of the light of his face, were amazed at the brightness of his clothes and, in the honour shown Him by Moses and Elijah who were with Him on either side, they recognized his great awesomeness. And they passed over from
1128A flesh to spirit, before they had put aside this fleshly life, by the change in their powers of sense that the Spirit worked in them, lifting the veils of the passions from the intellectual activity that was in them. Then, having both their bodily and the spiritual senses purified, they were taught the spiritual meanings *[logoi]* of the mysteries that were shown to them. They were taught hiddenly that the allblessed radiance that shone resplendently from his face, as it overpowered the sight of the eyes, was a symbol of His divinity that transcends mind and sense and being and knowledge. He had neither form nor beauty,[33] but they knew him as the Word become flesh, and thus were led to regard him as fair with beauty beyond the sons of men,[34] and to understand that He is the One who was
B in the beginning, and was with God and was God,[35] and through a theological denial[36] that praises Him as being completely uncontained, they were led contemplatively to the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.[37] The whitened garments conveyed a symbol of the words of Holy Scripture, which in this case became shining and clear and limpid to them, and were grasped by the mind without any riddling puzzle or symbolic shadow, revealing the meaning that lay hidden within them. Thus they arrived at a clear and correct understanding concerning God, and were set free from every attachment to the world and the flesh. Or [the garments can be understood as a symbol] of creation itself, which a base presumption regards in a limited way as delivered to the deceiving senses alone, but which can be
C understood, through the wise variety of the various forms that it contains, on the analogy of a garment, to be the worthy power of the generative Word who wears it. For in both cases what is said is accommodated to the meaning, so that in both cases it can be veiled from us because of its obscurity, lest we dare unworthily to apply it to what is beyond comprehension, whether, in the case of the written Holy Scripture, to the One revealed as the Word or, in the case of creation, to the One revealed as Creator and maker and fashioner. Whence in both cases I think it necessarily follows that anyone who wishes may live an upright and blameless life with God, whether through scriptural understanding in the Spirit, or through the natural

contemplation of reality in accordance with the Spirit. So the
D two laws—both the natural law and the written law—are of equal honour and teach the same things; neither is greater or less than the other, which shows, as is right, that the lover of perfect wisdom may become the one who desires wisdom perfectly.

18
Contemplation of the natural and the written law [38]

Now the law is best understood rationally by paying attention to the different things contained in it so that one sees the harmonious web of the whole. In this way it is seen to be something like a book. For a book has letters and syllables,
1129A the first things that come to our attention, connected together but individual, and condensing many properties by bringing them together; it also has words, which are more universal than these, being higher and more subtle, out of which meaning, that wisely divides and is ineffably inscribed in them, is read and perfected, and provides a concept that is unique or of however many forms, and through the reverent combination of different imaginings draws them into one likeness of the true. In an analogous way the author of existence gives himself to be beheld through visible things. [But the law] can be regarded as a form of teaching: in accordance with this wise suggestion, it seems to me to be, as it were, another universe *[cosmos]* made up of heaven and earth and what is in the middle, consisting of ethical, natural and theological philosophy,[39]
B thus displaying the ineffable power of the one who sets it down. This [law?] shows different things to be the same by fitting one into another—so the written law is potentially the natural and the natural law is habitually the written, so the same meaning is indicated and revealed, in one case through writing and what is manifest, in the other case by what is understood and concealed.[40] So the words of the Holy Scripture are said to be garments, and the concepts understood to be flesh of the Word, in one case we reveal, in the other we conceal. So we call garments the forms and shapes in which those things that have come to be are put forward to be seen, and we understand the meanings in accordance with which these things were created to be flesh, and thus in the former case we reveal, and in the latter we conceal. For the Creator of the universe and
C the lawgiving Word is hidden as manifest, since he is invisible

by nature, and is manifested as hidden, lest he is believed by the wise to be subtle in nature. So, on the one hand, what is hidden is to be manifest to us through denial, and every power of picturing what is true in shapes and riddles is rather to pass away and raise us up ineffably to the Word itself from the letter and what is apparent according to the power of the Spirit. On the other hand, what is apparent is to be hidden in attribution, lest, in a Gentile way,[41] we become murderers of the Word and *worship the creation instead of the Creator* (Rom. 1:25), believing that there is nothing higher than what is seen or more magnificent than the objects of sense, or else, in a Jewish way, looking only as far as the letter, we reduce manifold reality to the body alone, and deifying the belly and
D regarding what is shameful as glorious,[42] we receive the same inheritance as the deicides, not discerning the Word who, for our sake and by means of what we are, became flesh to be with us and was thickened[43] in syllables and letters to be perceived by us, inclining every power of the intelligible within us towards himself. So the divine Apostle says, *the letter kills, but the spirit gives life* (2 Cor. 3:6). For the letter, desired on its own sole account, is accustomed to kill the indwelling reason of those who desire it, just as the beauty of the creatures, if it is not referred to the glory of the Maker, naturally defrauds of
1132A rational reverence those who behold it. And again the Gospel says, *And if those days had not been shortened,* clearly [those days] of wickedness, *no flesh would be saved,* that is, any reverent thought about God (Matt. 24:22). For the days of wickedness are shortened, when the erring act of judgment that fashions them according to the senses is circumscribed by reason and lags behind reverent [rational] judgment. For the law of the flesh in no way differs from that of Antichrist, always wrestling with the Spirit and in opposition to its divine law, until the present life becomes dear and beloved to those who are overcome by it, and reason, not yet manifest by the word of power, is abolished, which distinguishes the mortal from the immortal, removing the wearying slavery from
B freedom, and demonstrating truth itself, pure of any falsehood, and marking off from the divine and the eternal what is material and transitory, to which the mind naturally inclines in error through its assimilation to them through the senses and is killed by its irrational affection. For it was especially and principally for the mind that the divinely-fitting descent of the Word took place, to raise it up from the death of ignorance, and repel its impassioned disposition to material

reality, and to restore its appetite for what is naturally lovely. Therefore I necessarily think that those who are rational should reflect on the body, which is much more important than its clothes, that is on the divine and exalted thoughts, disclosed by Holy Scripture and by looking at the created order, eagerly hastening towards reason through reason (for as
C the Word himself says, *Is not the soul more than food and the body more than clothing?:* Matt. 6:25), lest at any time they are convicted of not having these things, not grasping the Word that brought and brings everything into being, like that Egyptian woman who laid hold of only the clothes of Joseph and completely missed intercourse with a lover.[44] Thus, ascending the mountain of the divine Transfiguration, we shall behold the garments of the Word, by which I mean the words of Scripture, and the manifestation of creatures, which are radiant and glorious by the dogmas that penetrate them, rendered splendid by the divine Word for exalted contemplation, and as we ascend we shall not at all be repulsed in amazement from blessed contact with the Word, like Mary Magdalene who thought that the Lord Jesus was the
D gardener, not yet realizing that the fashioner of those things that are subject to change and corruption is beyond the senses. But we shall see and worship the Living One, who came to us from the dead through closed doors, the power of the senses within us being completely extinguished, the One who is the Word Himself and God who is all in all. All the intelligible thoughts that derive from his goodness we shall know as a body, and all the things made perceived through the senses as a garment. Concerning all this the following saying seems not
1133A inappropriate: *They shall all grow old like a garment* (Heb. 1: 11), because of the corruption that holds sway over what is beheld by the mind, *and like a mantle you will roll them up and they shall be changed* (Heb. 1:12), because of the anticipated grace of incorruptibility.

19
On the five modes of natural contemplation[45]

In addition to this, taught by creation, we shall know the meanings *[logoi],* that is to say the ultimate meanings that we long to know, and connected with them the five modes of contemplation. With these the Saints make distinctions within the created order and have assembled reverently its secret meanings, dividing them according to being, movement,

difference, mixture and position.[46] They say that three of them
B are intended to lead us to the knowledge of God, that is, being, movement and difference, in accordance with which God makes himself known to men who from the things that are conclude that He is the fashioner, provider, and judge. The other two—mixture and position— educate us to virtue and to assimilation to God. The man who forms himself in accordance with these becomes God, experiencing what God is from the things that are, as it were seeing with his mind the complete impression of God in accordance with goodness, and forming himself after this most limpidly with his reason. For what the pure mind naturally sees with reverent knowledge this, they say, it can also experience, becoming this itself in accordance
C with the habit of virtue. Thus being becomes the teacher of theology. Through it we, seeking the source of all things, teach through them that He is, not endeavouring to know how He is essentially, for there is no indication of this in the things that are; but through it we return, as from a thing caused, to the cause. Movement is indicative of the providence of beings. Through it we behold the unvarying sameness of each of the things that have come to be according to its being and form and similarly its inviolable mode of existence, and understand how everything in the universe is separated one from another in an orderly manner in accordance with the *logoi* in which each thing consists by the ineffable One who holds and protects everything in accordance with unity. Difference is indicative of judgment. Through it we are taught that God is
D the wise distributor, in each of the things that are, of the natural power of the individual *logoi* in a way proportionate to their underlying being. I attribute providence to mind, not as converting, or as it were dispensing the return of things subject to providence from what is not necessary to what is necessary, but as holding together the universe, and first of all preserving the universe in accordance with the *logoi* by which it consists. And judgment is not educative, and as it were punitive of sinners, but the saving and preserving distribution of beings, in accordance with which each of the things that has come to be, in connection with the *logoi* in accordance with which it exists, has an inviolable and unalterable constitution in its natural
1136A identity, just as from the beginning the fashioner determined and established that it was to be, what it was to be, and how and how much it was to be. In other words, providence and judgment are connected with our chosen impulses: they avert us in many ways from what is wicked, and draw us wisely

back to what is good, and by setting straight what is not in our control by opposing what is, they cut off all evil, whether present, future or past. For I do not say that in these things providence is one thing and judgment another. But I know them as potentially one and the same, but having a differing and many-formed activity in relation to us. Mixture (or
B composition) of beings is a symbol of our inclination. For when it cleaves to the virtues, and mixes them in itself, it is constituted at the level of mind as the divinely-fitting cosmos. Position is the teacher of the character that is chosen by inclination, steadily holding an opinion concerning the good and training those who oppose what is against it, and accept only on rational basis any kind of change. And again if they combine movement with position, and mixture with difference, they distinguish the substance of all things indivisibly[47] into being and difference and movement, and if they grasp that the cause is to be beheld from the things that are caused differently by an inventive and technical use of reason, they conceive this reverently as being and being wise and being alive.[48] Thence they are taught the divinely-perfect and saving meaning concerning the Father and the Son and the Holy
C Spirit, according to which they are hiddenly illuminated that the meaning of the cause is not simply that of being but are reverently initiated about the mode of existence.[49] And again carefully considering the whole of creation from the point of view of position alone, they contracted the five modes of contemplation mentioned into three, recognizing that creation in accordance with its own meaning teaches from heaven, earth and what is in between ethical, natural and theological philosophy.[50] Again beholding the creation from the point of view of difference alone, that is to say from the distinction between what is contained and what contains, I mean of heaven and what is within it, they reduce these three forms to two, by which I mean wisdom and philosophy, one that, as it were, circumscribes and receives in a way divinely fitting the
D above-mentioned reverent forms and encloses within itself the hidden and natural meanings of the others, while the other holds together, as it were, character and inclination, activity and contemplation, and virtue and knowledge, drawing them up by an intimate relationship to wisdom as cause. And again considering creation from the point of view of mixture as the harmonious composition of everything, and thinking of the fashioning Word as ineffably binding all things to one another

into the fulfilment of one cosmos by relating the parts to the
1137A whole, they reduce the two forms to one form of contemplation. In this way they direct the mind in a single glance through the *logoi* in things to the cause, drawing everything together in a single gathering, and passing over the dispersion of the individual *logoi* of the universe. Thus they are clearly persuaded by an accurate attention to the things that are that there is truly only One God, and of the being and movement of beings, and the clear distinction of what is different, and an indissoluble holding together of what is mixed, and an immutable foundation of what is set in position. So through their conviction that God is simply the cause of all being however understood, and of movement, and difference, mixture and position, through the resembling likeness they wisely transfer their hidden contemplation of the realm of the
B senses to the [spiritual] cosmos that is brought to fulness of being through the virtues at the level of mind in the Spirit. In this way, they gather together the above-mentioned forms of contemplation into the single meaning that, by the different forms of the virtues, fulfils the spiritual cosmos at the level of mind, and, as far as is possible, they impart them to themselves, passing through all the *logoi* of beings and those of the virtues, or rather with them passing to the one who transcends them, being drawn up to the [ultimate] *logos,* that is beyond being and goodness, for which these things are and from which being comes to them. So that wholly united, so far as is possible, to the natural power that is within them, they are made by Him so receptive as to be known from the sole one and to possess completely through the divine characteristics
C the form of the whole God the Word, contemplated as in the clearest of mirrors, missing none of the ancient characters, by which the human is naturally made known, everything yielding to what is better, just as dark air is wholly transformed by light.

20
Fivefold contemplation of Melchisedec [51]

20a

This, I think, that wonderful and great man, Melchisedec, knew and experienced,[52] about whom the divine Word in the Scriptures declares great and wonderful things, that he had

transcended time and nature, and was worthy to be likened to
D the Son of God. For, as far as is possible, he had become such
by grace and habit, as the Giver of grace is himself believed to
be by essence. For it is said of him that he is *without father or
mother or genealogy* (Heb. 7:3): what else can be understood
from this except that, by the the very highest pitch of grace in
accordance with virtue, he has perfectly put off natural
characteristics. And when it is said that he has *neither
beginning of days nor end of life* (ibid.), it bears witness to a
1140A knowledge embracing the properties of all time and eternity,
and to a contemplation transcending existence of all material
and immaterial being. And when it says that *resembling the
Son of God he remains a priest for ever* (ibid.), it perhaps
declares that he is able in accordance with his unchangeable
habit of the most godlike virtue and a divine reaching out after
God to keep his mental eye attentive until the end. For virtue
naturally fights against nature, and true contemplation
against time and eternity, in order that it may remain
unenslaved to anything else that is believed to exist under
God, and unconquered, knowing God alone the begetter, and
uncircumscribed, remaining in none of those beings that have
beginning or end, in itself manifesting the image of God, who
defines every beginning and end and draws up to His ineffable
B self every thought of intellectual beings in ecstasy. In these—I
mean, in knowledge and virtue—the divine likeness is shown,
and through them unmovable love towards God alone is
preserved in the worthy. In accordance with such love the
dignity of sonship, the divinely-fitting gift of continual
converse with God in his presence, is granted, exhibiting the
divine likeness to any who begs for it. Thus I take it that it is
probably not from time and nature, subject to which the great
Melchisedec reached his natural end, that it should be said of
those who have already transcended life and reason, that *the
divine Word justified him,*[53] but from and through those things
—I mean, virtue and knowledge —he deliberately changed
what he is called. Thus the deliberation[54] nobly struggles
through the virtues against the law of nature, that is so
C difficult to fight against, and through knowledge the movement
of the mind steps without defilement over properties of time
and eternity. With these it is not right to regard as
characteristic the property of what is abandoned, but rather
the magnificence of what is assumed, from which and in which
alone they are and are known. Thus we who are naturally
concerned with visible things recognize and name bodies from

their colours, just as we call air suffused by light light, and
matter consumed by fire fire, and a whitened body white, and
so on. If he deliberately preferred the virtue of nature and of
all those things that are in accordance with it through the good
choice of the dignity that is within his power, and transcended
by knowledge all time and eternity, deliberately in his
D contemplation making everything that is beneath God after
himself, abiding in none of those beings in which he beheld
any limit, the divine Melchisedec opened his mind to the
divine, unoriginate and immortal rays of the God and
Father,[55] and was begotten from God through the Word in the
Spirit by grace, and bore in himself safe and true the likeness
of God the begetter (since in the process of begetting what is
begotten is naturally the same as the begetter, for it is said:
*what is begotten from flesh is flesh, and what is begotten from
the Spirit is spirit: John* 3:6), then it follows that it was not
1141A from natural and temporal properties, in which father and
mother and genealogy, and beginning and end of days are
included, which things having passed beyond he is completely
released from them, that he is named but from divine and
blessed characteristics, after which his form has been
modelled, to which neither time, nor nature, nor reason, nor
mind, nor anything else that can be circumscribed can attain.
Therefore the great Melchisedec is recorded as being *without
father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days
nor end of life,* as the true word of God-bearing men declares
about him, not on account of a nature that is created and from
nothing, in accordance with which he began to be and will
cease to be, but on account of divine and uncreated grace,
which eternally exists beyond every nature and all time, from
God who eternally is, in accordance with which alone he is
B acknowledged as wholly begotten from the whole [God]. Alone
being such, he is preserved in the Scripture, as equally having
become according to virtue first beyond matter and form, as is
indicated by his being *without father or mother or genealogy,*
and according to knowledge transcending everything that is
subject to time and eternity. For it is not denied that such
temporal being began through generation, nor that knowledge
of them limps along the divine route with the intellect. [So his
possession of knowledge that transcends this] is perhaps
signified by his having neither beginning of days nor end of
life. And so transcendentally, hiddenly and silently, and to
speak briefly, unknowably, after every abstraction from all
beings at the level of mind he enters into God himself, and

made and transformed wholly to the whole, he is manifested
C in accordance with the verse: *Resembling the Son of God he remains a priest forever.* For each one of the Saints who has made a special beginning with the good in itself is declared to be a figure of God the giver. According to what this means, this great Melchisedec because of the divine virtue created in him is worthy to be an image of Christ the God, and of his ineffable mysteries, to whom all the saints are gathered together as to an archetype and source of the good impression that is in each one of them, especially this one, as bearing in himself for all the others most of the patterns of Christ.

D *20b*

For our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, who is absolutely single, is in nature and truth without father and without mother and without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. He is without mother because of the immaterial, bodiless and completely unknowable manner of his pre-eternal begetting from on high from the Father. He is without father according to his temporal and bodily begetting here below from his mother, which took place after a conception without intercourse. He is without genealogy, since both of his
1144A begettings have a form that is universally inaccessible and incomprehensible to all. He is without beginning of days or end of life, as being without beginning or end and utterly boundless, since he is by nature God. He remains a priest for ever, since he cannot cease to be by any kind of death, whether of evil or of nature, because he is God and the provider of all natural and virtuous life. Do not think that no-one can have a share in this grace, since the word defines it only in relation to the great Melchisedec. For God provides equally to all the power that naturally leads to salvation, so that each one who wishes can be transformed by divine grace. And nothing prevents anyone from willing to become Melchisedec, and Abraham, and Moses, and simply transferring all these Saints
B to himself, not by changing names and places, but by imitating their forms and way of life.

20c

Anyone therefore who puts to death the members that are on the earth, and extinguishes his whole fleshly way of thinking,[56] and shakes off his whole relationship to it, through

which the love that we owe to God alone is divided, and denies all the marks of the flesh and the world, for the sake of divine grace, so that he can say with the blessed Paul the Apostle, *Who will separate us from the love of Christ?* and the rest (Rom. 8:36)—such a person has become without father and mother and genealogy in accordance with the great Melchisedec, not being in any way subject to the flesh and nature, because of the union that has taken place with the Spirit.

C

20d

If then anyone denies himself in these things, in losing his own soul on account of me, he finds it.[57] That is: he goes beyond the present life with its wishes for the sake of the better [life], and possesses the *living and active* and utterly single *Word of God,* who through virtue and knowledge *penetrates to the division between soul and spirit* (Heb. 4:12). Such a one has no experience of what is present to it, and has become without beginning and end; he no longer bears within himself temporal life and its motions, which has beginning and end and is disturbed by many passions, but he possesses the sole divine and eternal life of the indwelling Word, a life unbounded by death.

D

20e

If then he knows how, with great attention, to be vigilant over his own gift, and cultivates the goods that are beyond nature and time through ascetic struggle and contemplation, he has
1145A become a lasting and eternal priest. Intellectually he enjoys divine communion forever, and by his unchanging inclination towards the good he imitates that which is naturally unchanging, and is not prevented, in a Jewish manner by the death of sin, from lasting forever. He gloriously speaks of God as the fashioner of all, and gratefully gives thanks to Him as the foreseeing and just Judge of all, as He offers, at the level of mind, a sacrifice of praise and confession within the divine *altar, from which those who worship in the tabernacle have no authority to eat* (Heb. 13:10).[58] For it is not, as it were, of the hidden loaves of divine knowledge and the mixing-bowl of living wisdom[59] that they partake who stick to the letter alone and regard as sufficient for salvation the sacrifices of irrational passions. For these are those who declare, through
B their ceasing from sinning, the death of Jesus, but do not

confess, through their intellectual contemplation, illuminated in justice by good works, His resurrection, on behalf of which and on account of which the death took place. They are most willing to be put to death in the flesh, but have not begun to be brought to life through the Spirit. They still cling to the stability of their tabernacle, and have not yet had revealed to them by the reason and knowledge of the Saints the way, which is the Word of God who says, *I am the way* (John 14:6). They know, from ascetical struggle, the Lord, the Word made flesh, but have no desire to come through contemplation to the *glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

C

21
Contemplation of Abraham

Again Abraham became spiritual, when he went out from his land and his kindred and the house of his father, and came to the land designated by God.[60] For by habit he broke away from the flesh, and by separation from the passions became outside it. He abandoned the senses, and no longer accepted any error of sin from them. He passed beyond everything perceived through the senses, so that nothing of them approached his soul to deceive or afflict it. With his mind alone, free from any material bond, he came to the divine and blessed land of knowledge. He travelled in a hidden way throughout its length and breadth,[61] and in it he discovered our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the good inheritance of those who fear Him. In length
D He [*sc.* Christ] is unimaginable in himself and is acknowledged as divine by those worthy of Him in so far as this can be among men. In breadth He is glorified by us, because of His most wise providence, which binds all things together,[62] and His economy for our sake, which is passing marvellous and transcendently ineffable.[63] Thus [Abraham] came to partake through ascetic struggle and contemplation in all the ways by which praise of the Lord is inculcated, and through which friendship with God and assimilation to Him are securely attained. To put it briefly, he who through ascetical struggle overthrows the flesh, sense and the world, through which the relationship of the mind to the intelligible is dissolved, and by
1148A his mind alone through love comes to know God: such a one is another Abraham, through equal grace shown to have the same mark of virtue and knowledge as the Patriarch.

22
Twofold contemplation of Moses

22a

And Moses again is shown to be another. In the time of the domination of the passions, that is to say of the devil, who is the Pharaoh of the intelligible world, tyrannically prevailing over the better in favour of the worse, and causing the fleshly to rise against the spiritual, so that every pious train of thought is destroyed, he who has been born according to God in his inclination and placed in the box of true struggle[64] is established outside fleshly ways of behaving and inside divine **B** thoughts according to the soul. He accepted to be subject to the senses, that is the daughter of the intelligible Pharaoh, until the law of the reception of natural contemplations.[65] With noble zeal he put to death the Egyptian-like *way of thinking that belongs to the flesh* (Rom. 8:6), and buried it in the sand.[66] By the sand, I mean that habit that is unfruitful in evils: if the tares of evil are sown by the enemy,[67] nothing comes up naturally because of its inherent poverty of the spirit, but it gives birth to and protects dispassion. By a divine command it is made desolate for the winds of wickedness, becomes a forest for the constantly changing waves of temptation and places a **C** limit to a sea of bitter and truly salty evil, as it is written, *Replaced sand as a boundary for the sea, saying to it. This far shall you go, and not transgress, and in you shall your waves be thrown together* (cf. Jer. 5:22). The trains of thought that still consent to the earth and seek enjoyment from it, where the passionate part [of the soul] naturally struggles against reason and the capacity to discriminate, and dominates and expels it—these he, being a wise shepherd, leads, like sheep, through the desert which is a condition deprived of passions and material things and pleasures, to the mountain of the knowledge of God, which can be beheld on the heights of the mind.[68] O what labours he expended and time he spent on behalf of those contemplations that attach one to the spiritual level by breaking the relationship of the mind to the things of sense (by this I mean the forty-year crossing [of the **D** wilderness]), and became worthy of beholding and hearing with his mind the ineffable, supernatural and divine fire that is present, as in the bush,[69] in the being of everything that exists, I mean God the Word, who in the last times shone forth from the Bush of the Holy Virgin and spoke to us in the

flesh.[70] As in approaching the bush he took off from his feet his sandals made of dead [skins], so he came near to such a mystery with the footstep of his mind bare, completely free from any human trains of thought. Like a face, he turned the eye of his mind towards sight. By faith alone he approached the place where the mystery is received, where it is as it were heard, and opened up the mind's disposition to obedience. In this way he defined the strong and unfading power of one who takes care to oppose the wicked powers and with great
1149A authority separated what is against nature from what is in accordance with nature, what is fleshly from what belongs to the soul, what is material and perceived by the senses from what is intelligible and immaterial, thus making what is free greatly transcendent over the power that is experienced as slavery.

22b

And to put it concisely, one who does not place himself under the yoke of sin, nor allow himself to be suffocated by the foul torrent of the passions through evil desire and lifted up by sense to enjoy the fountain of pleasures, but rather puts to death the *way of thinking that belongs to the flesh,* which tyrannizes over the soul's nobility, and is raised above everything that is subject to corruption and flees this erring world like a kind of Egypt, which crowds out the most clear-sighted mind with bodily cares; in quietness he holds converse
B with himself, and by industrious study of divine providence that divinely cares for the universe he is ineffably taught the wise economy through a contemplative knowledge of beings;[71] from there, through hidden [mystical] theology, which in ineffable ectasy is entrusted to the pure mind alone through prayer, he becomes unutterably conversant with God, as in a cloud and unknowing, and is inscribed by the finger of the God, the Holy Spirit, within himself, in his mind, with the dogmas of piety, and outside, like Moses and the tablets, with the graces of virtue,[72] or, to speak in scriptural terms, he *chooses to share ill-treatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin, and considers abuse suffered for Christ greater wealth than the treasures in Egypt* (Heb. 11: 25f.), that is the labours that are willing borne for the sake of virtue rather than wealth and glory that are fleeting and
C subject to corruption: such a one has become a spiritual Moses, and does not dispute with a visible Pharaoh, but with the

invisible tyrant and murderer of souls and leader of evil, the devil, and the wicked powers that accompany him, spiritually armed with the rod that he carries in his hand, that is, in ascetic struggle, with the power of the Word.

23
Contemplation of how the natural law and the written law correspond to each other[73]

Similarly each of us who wishes can have all the Saints changed into himself, in each case being formed spiritually
D from the things that are written figuratively about each one *(for these things happened to them figuratively,* says the divine Apostle, *but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come:* 1 Cor. 10:11). With the Saints from of old before the law, one acquires piously knowledge of God from the creation of the world, and is taught how the virtues are to be exercised from the providence that wisely orders the universe, according to those themselves who were Saints before the law, who through all things naturally in the spirit write beforehand in themselves the written law, and
1152A are set forth as examples of piety and virtue for those after the law *(for look,* it says, *to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you:* Isa. 51:2). With those who are after the law, one is led through the commandments to knowledge of God who is named in them, and made beautiful by the proper forms of the virtues through noble exercise, and taught that the natural law is the same as the written, when wisely through symbols made manifold in their exercise, and again that the written is the same as the natural, when it becomes of single form and simple and free of symbols [manifest] in those worthy through reason and contemplation in accordance with virtue and knowledge. So all the Saints written about in Scripture show that the letter is a kind of veil, taken away by the Spirit who
B possesses the natural law.

24
That through the law the Saints[74] foresaw grace

For all those who beheld clearly beforehand that there would be another form of worship beside that of the law preached beforehand that what was to be manifest according to this would be the consummation of the life that is most worthy of

God, naturally fitting and most appropriate, since they needed nothing external for perfection, just as the divine oracles in the law and the prophets were plainly established to all those who were not ignorant. Both David and Hezekiah, especially, indicated enigmatically something of this to others in the events that happened to them, the one seeking pardon of God in the manner of the law on account of his sin,[75] the other
C being magnified with increase of life by God with another ordinance that went beyond the law.[76]

25
That the one who follows Christ transcends law and nature

Nothing, I think, hinders one who has been prepared by the laws, that is the natural and the written, from becoming worthy of God and loved by God through these, and beyond these from following faithfully in pure faith the Word that leads to the highest point of the good. Nor does anything at all that is grasped by the mind, by deed, or thought, or conception, to which is subject the nature and knowledge of whatever either is conceived or simply is, or by which it is made
D manifest, hinder one from following faithfully Jesus who has passed through the heavens, or from being able to receive from the manifestation of the divine light the true knowledge of reality, so far as this is possible to human beings.

1153A

26
Contemplation of the same[77]

For the whole nature of reality is divided into the intelligible and the sensible.[78] There is that which is said to be and is eternal, since it receives the beginning of its being in eternity, and that which is temporal, since it is made in time; there is that which is subject to intellection, and that which is subject to the power of sense-perception. The entities on each side of this division are naturally related to each other through an indissoluble power that binds them together. Manifold is the relation between intellects and what they perceive and between the senses and what they experience. Thus the human being, consisting of both soul and sensible body, by means of its natural relationship of belonging to each division of creation, is both circumscribed and circum-**B** scribes: through being, it is circumscribed and through potency, it

circumscribes. So in its two parts it is divided between these things, and it draws these things through their own parts into itself in unity. For the human being is circumscribed by both the intelligible and the sensible, since it is soul and body, and it has the natural capacity of circumscribing them, because it can both think and perceive through the senses. God is simply and indefinably beyond all beings, both what circumscribes and what is circumscribed and the nature of those [categories] without which none of these could be, I mean, time and eternity and space, by which the universe is enclosed, since He is completely unrelated to anything. Since all this is so, the one who discerns with sagacity how he ought to love God, the transcendent nature, that is beyond reason and knowledge and any kind of relationship whatever, passes without relation through everything sensible and intelli gible and all time and
C eternity and space. Finally he is super-naturally stripped bare of every energy that operates in accordance with sense or reason or mind, and ineffably and unknowably attains the divine delight that is beyond reason and mind, in the form and fashion that God who gives such grace knows and those who are worthy of receiving this from God understand. He no longer bears about with him anything natural or written, since everything that he could read or know is now utterly transcendent and wrapped in silence.

27
Contemplation of the one who fell among thieves[79]

D And perhaps this is the 'whatever more you spend than the two denarii' (see Luke 10.35) given by the Lord for the care of the one who had fallen among thieves at the inn where he was to be cared for: it is what the Lord, when He comes again, liberally undertakes to give, the complete negation of beings in those who are perfect, something that comes to be through faith (for the Lord says, *whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple:* Luke 14:33). Accordingly one who gives up everything of his own —or to put it more appropriately: above all things gives up himself —such a one
1156A has made himself a lover of wisdom and is worthy to be with God alone. He has received the adopted sonship, proclaimed in the Gospels, after the manner of the holy and blessed Apostles, who stripped themselves completely of everything and cleaved to the one who is wholly and solely God and Word.

They say to the maker of nature and the giver of help according to the law, *Behold we have left all and followed you* (Matt. 19:27), and possessing Him, that is the Lord, as the most singular light of truth instead of law and nature, they fittingly receive the unfailing knowledge of all that is after God. The knowledge of all that has come to be through Him is naturally and properly made known together with Him. For just as with the rising of the sensible sun all bodies are made known, so it is with God, the intelligible sun of righteousness, rising in the mind: although He is known to be separate from
B the created order, He wishes the true meanings of everything, whether intelligible or sensible, to be made known together with Himself. And this is shown on the mount of the Transfiguration of the Lord when both the brightness of his garments and the light of His face, made Him known, and drew to God the knowledge of those who were after Him and around Him. For as the eye cannot, without light, grasp sensible things, neither can the mind, apart from the knowledge of God, receive spiritual contemplation. For there light gives to sight the perception of visible things, and here the vision of God grants to the mind the knowledge of things intelligible.

C

28
Contemplation of Adam's transgression

As the forefather Adam did not pay attention to God with the eye of the soul, he neglected this light, and willingly, in the manner of a blind man, felt the rubbish of matter with both his hands in the darkness of ignorance, and inclined and surrendered the whole of himself to the senses alone. Through this he took into himself the corruptive venom of the most bitter of wild beasts, and did not benefit from his senses apart from God, and instead of God, as he wished, nor take care to possess the things of God, in accordance with God, as it ought to be, as something inconceivable. For when he decided to be guided by his senses, which are much more like the serpent
D than God, and took the first-fruits of food from the forbidden tree, in which he had been taught beforehand that fruit and death went together,[80] he changed the life that is proper to fruit, and fashioned for himself a living death for the whole of the time of this present age. For if death exists as the corruption of coming to be, the body that is preserved in being by the flux of nourishment is always naturally suffering

corruption as it is dissolved by flux itself. So Adam always feels confident in the existence of such flourishing life and thus both for himself and for us he preserves death. If rather he had trusted in God and been nourished from *the tree of life* (Gen. 2:9), that was there too, he would not have set aside the immortality that had been granted. For such immortality is eternally preserved by participation in life, since all life is
1157A genuine and preserved by appropriate food. The food of that blessed life is *the bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world* (John 6:33), just as the inerrant Word himself declares about himself in the Gospels. In not wishing to be nourished by Him, the first man rightly fell away from the divine life, and took death as another parent. Accordingly he put on himself the irrational form, and blackened the inconceivable beauty of the divine, and delivered over the whole of nature as food for death. Death is living on this through the whole of this temporal period, making us his food, and we no longer live, but are eternally eaten up by him through corruption.

B

29
That from the present life the Saints understood the future

The Saints, wisely grasping the futility and constant change of this life, have learnt that the life that is given directly to men by God is not this life, and have secretly taught that there is another divine and genuine life, which they hold must be directly and fittingly fashioned by God, who is good. Turning the eye of the soul to this through wisdom in accordance with the grace of the Spirit, so far as this is possible for men bound under death, and receiving the divine longing for this within, they rightly reckon that this present life is to be put aside, if
C they are to receive purely that life, in accordance with the binding character of reason. And since there is no putting aside of life without death, they thought that its death is the rejection of fleshly love, through which death gained entrance into life, so that, thinking of death by death, they ceased from living through death, and died an honourable death before the Lord. This is truly the death of death, able to corrupt corruption itself, and provide an entrance to the blessed life and incorruption for those who are worthy. For I do not think that the limit of this present life is rightly called death, but rather release from death, separation from corruption, freedom

from slavery, cessation of trouble, the taking away of wars, passage beyond confusion, the receding of darkness, rest from
D labours, silence from confused buzzing, quiet from excitement, a veiling of shame, flight from the passions, the vanishing of sin, and, to speak briefly, the termination of evils. By achieving these things through voluntary mortification, the Saints commend themselves as *strangers and exiles* (Heb. 11: 13) from this life. For fighting nobly against the world and the body and rebellions they inspire, and strangling the deceit that comes from both through the senses' entanglement with things sensible, they preserve for themselves the unenslaved worth of the soul. Quite rightly they judge it to be lawful and
1160A just for the worse to be led by the better, rather than the better to be bound by the worse. This is a divine law, implanted in those who choose the life fit to be welcomed by rational beings, which by frugality imitates the self-sufficiency and consecrated rest of the angels.

30
That the Saints are not introduced into the mysteries like us

But going back to what has been already contemplated, let us turn our attention according to our means to the rest of the meaning of the Transfiguration, so that the excellence of the Saints in everything and their genuine separation from the flesh and matter may be seen. And let us note that they do
B not contemplate either creation or Scripture like us in a material or lowly way. They do not acquire the blessed knowledge of God only by sense and appearances and forms, using letters and syllables, which lead to mistakes and bafflement over the judgment of the truth, but solely by the mind, rendered most pure and released from all material mists. Since therefore we want to judge reverently and see clearly and intelligibly the meanings of those things perceived by the senses, we must look carefully to the inerrant knowledge concerning God and divine things and rightly proceed along the straight path.

31
Further contemplation of the Transfiguration, containing eighteen spiritual interpretations[81]

31a

Therefore it was said above that through the luminous brightness that shone from the face of the Lord on the mount
C the thriceblessed apostles were secretly led in an ineffable and unknowable manner to the power and glory of God which is completely incomprehensible to every being, for they learnt that the light that appeared to their senses is a symbol of what is hidden and beyond any manifestation. For as the ray of the light that came to pass here overwhelmed the strength of the eyes and remained beyond their grasp, so also there God transcends all the power and strength of the mind and leaves no kind of trace for the mind to experience. The white garments teach, in a divinely fitting way, at one and the same time both the magnificence that lies in creatures proportionately to the *logoi* according to which they have come into being and the mysterious revelation found in the under standing of the words of Holy Scripture, so that the
D written power in the Spirit and the wisdom and knowledge manifested together in creatures are displayed together for the knowledge of God, and through them again he is proportionately manifested. Through Moses and Elijah, who were with Him on either side, they are taught many various conceptions which are put forward as figures of mysteries: through true contemplation of them they found ways of knowing. It is this that must now be examined.
1161A 1 And first they received through Moses and Elijah the most reverent notion about how the legal and the prophetic word had always to be present with God the Word, as they are and proclaim from Him and concerning Him and they are established around Him.

2 Then they are taught through them about wisdom and kindness dwelling with Him. It is in accordance with wisdom that the word is declaratory of things made and prohibitory of things not made, and of this Moses is the type, for we believe the grace of law-giving to belong to wisdom. And it is in accordance with kindness that the word invites and causes to return to the divine life those who have slipped away from it,
B and of this Elijah is the type, through himself manifesting the complete prophetic gift. For the conversion through love for

humankind of those who have erred is a characteristic of divine kindness, and the heralds of this we know as the prophets.

3 Or knowledge and education. Knowledge is the source in human beings of the understanding of good and evil. *For I have set before your face,* he says, *life and death* (Deut. 30:19), the one you are to elect, the other to flee, and lest through ignorance you disguise the worse with the good, Moses proclaims what is to be done, prefiguring in himself the symbols of the truth. Education is needed for those who without restraint do what is contrary and indiscriminately mix what should not be mixed. In Israel the great Elijah was their
C teacher, the scourge of indifference, who, like reason, led to understanding and sense the mindlessness and hardness of those who were utterly addicted to evil.

4 Or ascetic struggle and contemplation. Ascetic struggle destroys evil and through the demonstration of the virtues cuts off from the world those who are completely led through it in their disposition, just as Moses led Israel out of Egypt and educated her persuasively through the divine laws of the Spirit. Contemplation seizes them as it were from matter and form, like Elijah on his chariot of fire,[82] leading them to God through knowledge and uniting them with Him, so that they are no longer weighed down by the flesh because of the setting aside of its law, nor burning with zeal for the fulfilment of the commandments, because of the grace of poverty of spirit mixed with all real virtues. 5 Or again they learnt from the Word the
D mysteries of marriage and celibacy: through Moses, how one is not prevented by marriage from being a lover of the divine glory; and through Elijah, how he remained completely pure from any marital intercourse, and how the Word and God proclaims that those who direct themselves in these things by reason according to the laws that are divinely laid down concerning them are made to enter into Himself in a hidden way.

6 Or life and death: through them they are faithfully assured that the Word is Lord.

1164A 7 Or they learnt, too, through these that everyone lives to God and no-one at all is dead with Him, but that one kills oneself through sin and, through the willing turning towards the passions, cuts oneself off from the Word.

8 Or again they received illumination that the types of the mysteries exist in relation to and are referred to the Word,

which is the truth, and are brought into agreement with It, as the beginning and end of the legal and prophetic work.

9 Or everything that is after God and has come into being from God, that is the nature of beings and time, these appear together, so far as is possible, with God who appears as cause and maker. And of these, the type of time is Moses, not only as the teacher of time and of number in accordance with time
B (for he was the first to count time from the creation of the world),[83] or as one who instituted temporal worship, but also as not entering bodily into rest with those whom he had instructed before the divine promise.[84] For such is time, not overtaking or accompanying in movement those whom it is accustomed to escort to the divine life of the age to come. For it has Jesus as the universal successor of time and eternity. And if otherwise the *logoi* of time abide in God, then there is manifest in a hidden way the entry of the law given through Moses in the desert to those who receive the land of possession. For time is eternity, when movement is stilled, and eternity is
C time, when it is measured by movement, since, by definition, eternity is time deprived of movement, and time is eternity measured by movement.[85] Elijah, however, is the type of nature, not only as guarding inviolate the *logoi* within himself, and keeping the intention according to inclination in them free from any change due to passion, but also as educating in judgment, like the natural law, those who use nature unnaturally. For such is nature, punishing as much those who are set to corrupt it, as those who aim to live contrary to nature, who do not acquire the whole power of nature naturally, and cause its soundness to deteriorate, and are therefore fit to be punished, since they thoughtlessly and
D mindlessly provide themselves with a deficiency of being through their inclination towards non-being.

10 Equally anyone who says that the intelligible and sensible creation of the fashioner Word is understood through Moses and Elijah does not utterly stray from the truth. Of these Moses offers the meaning *[logos]* of the sensible, that it is subject to change and corruption, as his history of it clearly shows, declaring its origination and death. For the sensible creation is such as to have a beginning known in coming to
1165A be, and to look for an end determined by destruction.[86] Elijah [offers the meaning] of the intelligible, neither declaring its coming to be in his account of it, as if it had been generated, nor defining it as looking for corruption through death, as if it were to die. For the intelligible creation is such

as to have no beginning of its coming to be that is manifest to human beings, and if it comes to be and commences and passes from non-being to being, it does not await an end of its existence defined by corruption. For it is naturally imperishable, having received this from God who willed to create it such.

31b

B Lest I appear to any to be more curious than is necessary, another great and divine mystery, I think, is revealed to us in the divine Transfiguration, more radiant than what I have just said. For I think that the divinely-fitting events that took place on the mount at the Transfiguration secretly indicate the two universal modes of theology: that is, that which is pre-eminent and simple and uncaused, and through sole and complete denial truly affirms the divine, and fittingly and solemnly exalts its transcendence through speechlessness, and then that which follows this and is composite, and from what has been caused magnificently sketches out [the divine] through affirmation.[87] By these, so far as it is within human capacity, the knowledge that hovers above concerning God and the divine leads us through symbols naturally fitted to us to both these modes [of theology], through reverent
C understanding of both kinds of beings establishing their *logoi,* and teaching that every symbol that transcends the senses belongs to the first mode [of theology], and educating us that the accumulated mighty works of the sensible order belong to the second. For from the symbols that transcend the senses we believe only the truth that transcends reason and mind, barely daring to investigate or to form an idea of what and how and of what kind it is, and where and when, avoiding what is irreverent in the undertaking. And from those things on the sensible level, so far as is possible to us, from thought alone we plainly form conjectures concerning the knowledge of God and say that He is all that we can deduce from the fact that He is
D the cause of all that he has made.

31c

Let us consider whether in each of the above-mentioned forms [of theology] the symbol is really and wisely constituted in accordance with that divine Transfiguration of the Lord. For He accepted to be unchangeably created in form like us and

through his immeasurable love for humankind to become the type and symbol of Himself, and from Himself symbolically to represent Himself, and through the manifestation of Himself to lead to Himself in His complete and secret hiddenness the whole creation, and while He remains quite unknown in his hidden, secret place beyond all thing, unable to be known or understood by any being in any way whatever, out of his love
1168A for humankind he grants to human beings intimations of Himself in the manifest divine works[88] performed in the flesh.

31d

The light from the face of the Lord, therefore, conquers the human blessedness of the apostles by a hidden apophatic theology. According to this [light], the blessed and holy Godhead is by essence beyond ineffability and unknowability and countlessly raised above all infinity, leaving not the slightest trace of comprehension to those who are after it [*sc.* the Godhead], nor disclosing any idea to any being as to how
B and how far the same is both monad and triad,[89] since the uncreated is not naturally contained by creation, nor is the unlimited comprehended by what is limited.

31e

The affirmative mode [of theology] can be differentiated into those concerned with activity, with providence and with judgment. The mode [concerned with activity], starting from the beauty and magnitude of creatures, introduces the explanation that the God of all is the fashioner, this shown through the radiant garments of the Lord, which the Word shows to be the manifestation of creatures.

C

31f

The mode concerned with providence signifies through Moses how out of love for humankind it is raised above those who are embroiled in evil and error and wisely distinguishes among human beings the ways of departure from the material and corruptible and bodily to the divine and immaterial and bodiless, and with understanding implants the divine laws.

31g

The mode of judgment suggests through Elijah how judgment punishes by word and deed those who deserve it, and deals with others suitably in each case in accordance with the
D underlying matter and kind of virtue or evil. For according to this scriptural passage,[90] it is from things seen beforehand that Moses and Elijah sketch figuratively divine matters in the best way possible, each in a way appropriate to the mode of spiritual contemplation.

31h

From what they [Moses and Elijah] said to the Lord and their
1169A speaking of the exodus that was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem,[91] they were taught not only about the accomplishment of the mysteries proclaimed beforehand by the law and the prophets, but equally they learnt that the precise measure of the ineffable will of God concerning the universe is not to be apprehended by any being at all, nor the measure of the divine economies consequent on that will, nor yet the measure of his great providence and judgment, through which the universe is led in an orderly manner towards the end that is known beforehand by God alone. Of this no-one knows its nature, or how it will be, or in what form or when, it is simply known that it will be, and then only to those who have purified their souls through the virtues and have inclined the whole of their mind wholly towards the divine. To them there is granted, as has been said, an apprehension of providence and judgment of the whole nature of visible things, and the modes through which the end of this present harmony
B naturally consists, and is well-nigh expressly proclaimed.

32
Contemplation of the end of the world

Those who look carefully at the present world, making the most of their learning, and wisely tease out with their mind the *logos* that folds together the bodies that harmoniously constitute it in various ways—they discover what is perceived through the senses, and what is understood and what is universal, everything contained in everything and turning by the exchange of the individual qualities of each. For by nature the senses are contained by what is perceived through the

senses, and what is perceived through the senses is contained by the senses through sensation, as being understood. And
C again the universal is corrupted by change into the particular, and the particular, turned into the universal by reduction, also suffers corruption. And there comes about the corruption of everything that owes its coming to be to others. For the union of universals with one another, which causes the coming to be of particulars, is the corruption of one another by change, and the reduction of particulars to universals by the dissolution of their being bound together, leading to corruption, is the continuance and coming to be of the universals. And learning that this is the constitution of the world of the senses—the change and corruption of the bodies through which and in which it consists, one into another—we come to understand that it follows from the natural property of the bodies in which it consists—their instability and changeability and their chameleon-like alteration of universal qualities—that it is not
D possible for the world to have a necessary consummation. Nor can it be rightly thought that what does not possess eternity should appear to any rational understanding as eternal, separate from change and alteration, and not rather scattered and changing in a myriad of ways.

33
Contemplation of the future world, and of the gulf, of Lazarus, and the bosom of Abraham[92]

1172A Those who have nobly passed from her, beyond things visible, conjecture concerning the limit of the universe, which is wholly in the future, in which there will no longer be among beings anything bearing or anything borne, nor any kind of motion at all in the ineffable stability which defines the range and motion of what is borne and moved. Those who desire with the mind to reach this, while still encumbered with corruptible flesh, need consciously to cross over the gulf between God and human beings and willingly to be freed from any relationship to flesh and the world. For truly the great and fearful gulf between God and human beings is the desire and inclination to the body and this world. It was deprivation of these things that Lazarus joyfully embraced (clearly manifest in sickness and want, the one in relation to the world, the other in relation to the body, which worked in him estrangement), and made
B him worthy to receive rest in the bosom of Abraham. But the rich man who was attached to all these was abandoned without

forgiveness, needing nothing of life in the flesh other than to be punished without end. For he neither possessed the present life, which flows away uncontrollably by nature, and which he longed to enjoy by itself, nor was he able to have a share in that which is to come, to which he was but feebly moved, with little desire. For it can only be attained by those who wholeheartedly love it, and on account of their desire for it eagerly and with delight endure every suffering. Hearing of the bosom of Abraham, we think of God made manifest to us in the flesh as one of the seed of Abraham, truly the provider of all to all who are worthy of his grace in proportion to the
C quality and the quantity of each one's virtue. For he divides himself indivisibly among different pastures through the natural undivided being of unity, and is not shared out to those who participate in any way whatever. Again through the different worth of the participants he is manifest paradoxically separately to each who share in accordance with an ineffable unity (something understood by reason). To this world no-one will be able to pass who rejoices in the softness of the flesh or who takes more delight in the deceit of the world than His blessed glory, nor will anyone be able to stand with the One who has conquered the world who has been worsened by the world or evilly rejoiced over it. For the divine justice will not judge those to be worthy who in this life have arrayed
D themselves in a human way and decked themselves out with wealth and health of body and other dignities. Those will alone be judged blessed who count nothing of value alongside the goods of the soul and share in divine and eternal goods, beside which they take account of nothing whatever through any kind of care for material things, completely oblivious of wealth and health and other transient goods which the virtues transcend.

34
Contemplation of the virtues[93]

Consequently a human being is blessed who has virtues, whether or not he has any other blessings besides. If he has virtues and other advantages too, he is blessed in a general
1173A sense, as one said who was wise in divine matters. If he has virtues alone and for their own sake, he is blessed in a more circumscribed sense. For some things are thought of in a more circumscribed way, as when we think of two cubits, others in a more general way, as when we think of a heap. For you can take away two measures from a heap, and will be left with a

heap. If you take away all bodily and external advantages from the condition of general blessedness, and leave nothing whatever but the virtues, it remains a state of blessedness. For virtue, by itself, is sufficient for happiness. Therefore every bad person is wretched, even if he has all the so-called blessings of the earth, if he is deprived of the virtues. And every good person is blessed, even if he is deprived of all earthly blessings, since he has the radiance of virtue. It is because of this that Lazarus rejoiced, at rest in the bosom of
B Abraham.

1176B

35

Contemplation of how God is understood from creation[94]

So therefore when the Saints behold the creation, and its fine order and proportion and the need that each part has of the whole, and how all the perfect parts have been fashioned wisely and with providence in accordance with reason that fashioned them, and how what has come to be is found to be not otherwise than good beside what now is, and is in need of no addition or subtraction in order to be otherwise good, they are taught from the things he has made that there is One who fashioned them. So,[95] too, when they see the permanence, the
C order and position of what has come to be, and its manner of being, in accordance with which each being, according to its proper form, is preserved unconfused and without any disorder; and the course of the stars proceeding in the same way, with no alteration of any kind, and the circle of the year proceeding in an orderly manner according to the periodic return of the [heavenly bodies] from and to their own place, and the equal yearly proportion of the nights and days, with their mutual increase and decrease, taking place according to a measure that is neither too small nor too great, they understand that behind everything there is providence, and this they acknowledge as God, the fashioner of all.

D

36
Contemplation that the world has a beginning

For who, seeing the beauty and greatness of God's creatures, does not immediately understand that He has brought all this into being, as the beginning and source of beings and their maker? In his understanding he returns to Him alone, leaving

behind all these things. For though he cannot accomplish the complete transition with his mind, or receive without intermediary the object of his desires which he knows through the mediation of its effects, he can readily put away the error that the world is without beginning, as he reasons truly that
1177A everything that moves must certainly begin to move. No motion is without beginning, since it is not without cause. For motion has a beginning, and a cause from which it is called and an end to which it is drawn. If the beginning of the movement of every moving thing is its motion, and its end the cause to which what is moved is borne (for nothing is moved without cause), then none of the beings is unmoved, except that which moves first (for that which moves first is completely unmoved, because it is without beginning), and none of the beings then is without beginning, because none is unmoved.[96] For every kind of being is moved, except for the sole cause which is unmoved and transcends all things, those beings that are intelligent and rational in a way in accordance with knowledge and understanding, because they are not knowledge itself or understanding itself. For neither is their
B knowledge or understanding their being, but something they acquire as they consider their being with correct judgment in accordance with mind and reason (what I call their constituent powers[97]).

37
Contemplation of being, quantity and quality

But that which is simply called being itself is not only the being of those things subject to change and corruption, moved in accordance with change and corruption, but also the being of all beings whatever that have been moved and are moved in accord ance with the reason and mode of expansion and
C contraction. For it is moved from the most universal kind through the more universal kinds to the forms, by which and in which everything is naturally divided, proceeding as far as the most specific forms, by a process of expansion *[diastolê],* circumscribing its being towards what is below, and again it is gathered together from the most specific forms, retreating through the more universal, up to the most universal kind, by a process of contraction *[systolê],* defining its being towards what is above.[98] Thus it can be described either way, either from above or from below, and is shown as possessing both beginning and end, not at all capable of being defined by

limitlessness. So it has quantity, not just the quantity of those things subject to change and corruption which are perceived
D to increase and decrease in every way naturally, but also every kind of quantity that can be circumscribed when it is moved by tightening and loosening and given form according to expansion by partial differences, without however flowing out into limitlessness, and again gathered together as it retreats in accordance with its kind, without however losing its natural form. Similarly with quality which is not just that moved by change in beings subject to change and corruption, but every kind of quality, moved according to difference in what is changeable and soluble, and receptive of expansion and contraction. For no-one can say that anything that can
1180A naturally be scattered and gathered together again either by reason or force can reasonably be thought to be completely unmoved. If it is not unmoved, it is not without beginning. If it is not without beginning, then clearly it is not ingenerate, but just as everyone knows that the motion of what is moved must have had a beginning, so anything that has come into being must have begun to come into being, receiving its being and movement from the sole One who has not come into being and is unmoved. That which has begun to come into being could not in any way be without beginning.

B

38
Proof that everything apart from God exists in a place[99]

I should say, too, that the fact that beings exist in a certain way and not simply—that this, indeed, is the first form of circumscription—is a powerful factor in proving that beings have a beginning in respect of being and generation. Who is ignorant of the fact that every kind of being whatever, apart from the divine and unique being, which properly speaking exists beyond being itself, is already thought of as being somewhere, and that, together with this, it is necessarily thought of as certainly existing at some time? For space cannot be thought of, separate from and deprived of time (for they go together and one cannot be without the other), **C** nor can time be separated from and deprived of space, for they are naturally thought of together. By space, we mean that everything is shown as being in a place. For the totality of everything is not beyond the universe (for it is irrational and impossible to conceive of the universe itself as being beyond

everything that it is), but being circumscribed from itself and in itself, in accordance with the infinite power of the cause of all that circumscribes everything, the limit itself is outside itself. And this is the place of the universe, just as certain people define space,[100] saying that space is what surrounds the universe, either the position that is outside the universe, or the limit of the container in which what is contained is contained. And by time, it is indicated that everything is certainly in time, since everything that possesses existence after God possesses this existence in a certain way and not
D simply. And therefore they are not without beginning. For if we know how something is, we may know that it is, but not that it [always] was.[101] Thus when we say that the divine is, we do not say how it is. And therefore we say of him that 'he is' and 'he was' simply and boundlessly and absolutely. For the divine cannot be grasped by any reason or thought, nor do we grasp his being when we say that he is. For being is derived from him but he is not being.[102] For he is beyond being itself, and beyond anything that is said or conceived of him, whether simply or in a certain way. But beings possess being in a certain way, and not simply, so that where they are is
1181A determined by their position and the natural limit of the *logoi* that are in them, and when they are [is determined] from their beginning.

39
Proof that there is nothing infinite apart from God

And again the being of all the many beings that are in the universe cannot be infinite (for there is a limit to all these things in their multitudinous quantity which circumscribes the *logos* of their being and manner of being, for the being of the universe is not unbounded), nor can the substance of any
B of them be without circumscription, for they are mutually circumscribed in accordance with their *logos* by number and being. If none of the beings is free from circumscription, all the beings clearly receive in proportion to themselves both when and where they are. Apart from these, nothing at all can be, neither being, nor quantity, nor quality, nor relation, nor action, nor passion, nor movement, nor habit, nor any other of those attributes with which those who know about these things delimit the universe. Therefore no being is without beginning, if something else can be thought of before it, or

uncircumscribed, if something else can be thought of alongside
it. If no being is without beginning or uncircumscribed, as
follows naturally from the *logos* of the beings, then there was
certainly a time when each of the beings was not. And if it was
not, it certainly came into being, since [otherwise] it would not
be. For it cannot receive being and becoming apart from
C change and alteration. For if it was and [then] became, it
changed, going over to what it was not by a process of
becoming, or it was altered, receiving an addition to its beauty
that it lacked. Nothing that has changed, or altered, or lacked
form, can be complete in itself. What is not complete in itself
certainly lacks some other thing that will allow it wholeness,
and then it is whole, but not complete in itself, since it has
wholeness not by nature but by participation. That which
needs another for wholeness stands in much greater need
when it comes to being itself. For if, as they say,[103] being is
established as better than form, any particular being can
either grant itself this or possess it simply, as they want to
D say, but why is it not strong enough to possess simply or grant
itself what is worse, that is the form? And if any particular
being is not strong enough to grant itself what is worse, or
possess it simply, whether those who dare to regard as without
beginning beings that are after God and derived from him want
to call it being or matter (for they make no distinction), why
cannot it possess either simply or from itself what is better, by
which I mean being, when it cannot possess what is worse? If
matter can in no way possess, either from itself, or simply,
1184A what is worse, still less can it possess being itself simply, or
from itself. How then can what is too weak to possess, as has
been shown, what is worse—that is form—or what is better —
that is being—ever possess anything? If this is so, then being
and form must be given to beings by God, for they exist. If then
all being and matter and every form is from God, no-one who
is not completely deprived of any sane thought could maintain
that matter is without beginning and ungenerate, since he
knows that God is the maker and fashioner of the beings.

B

40

Proof that nothing is without motion save God and the monad

And again, if matter was [absolutely],[104] as some say, then it
clearly did not come into being; if it did not come into being, it
was not moved; if it was not moved, it did not begin to be; if it

did not begin to be, then it is without beginning of any kind; if it is without beginning, then it is infinite; if it is infinite, then it is certainly unmoved (for the infinite is certainly unmoved, for what is not limited can have no place in which to be moved); and if this is the case, then there are assuredly two infinites, unmoved and without beginning, God and matter, which is inconceivable. For the dyad[105] could be neither infinite, nor without beginning, nor unmoved, nor the
C beginning of anything at all, for it is circumscribed in accordance with unity and division. It is circumscribed by unity since it has existence as the composition of monads, which it contains as parts, and into which it can be divided as parts (for nothing that is infinite could be divisible or divided, or composite or compounded, by nature or arrangement or in any other way, nor could it simply be division or composition itself, because it is neither sole and simple, nor numerable, nor numbered, nor co-numbered, nor simply free from any kind of relationship; for all these things are beheld in relationship one to another, but the infinite is unrelated, for it cannot be held in any kind of relationship at all). It [the dyad] is circumscribed by division, since it is moved by number, from which it begins and in which it is contained, since it does not possess being by
D nature and free from any relationship.

41
On the dyad and the monad[106]

For each dyad is established by number and so is each monad, as a part completing it, so that together the monads take away uncircumscribability. No-one who thought about it would assign infinity to anything, alongside which from eternity and by nature there could be seen and posited difference, for they would know that this is completely excluded from the nature of the infinite. For the infinite is infinite in every kind of way—in respect of being, potentiality, and activity,[107] and in respect of both limits, I mean both above and below, that is in respect of both beginning and end. For the infinite is unbounded in respect of being, incomprehensible in respect of potentiality,
1185A and uncircumscribed in respect of operation, and without beginning from above, and without end from below, and simply to put it most truthfully, it is completely without limit, since nothing can be thought together with it in any of the ways of numeration. Accordingly we say that it can have no kind of meaning or mode, and no kind of essential difference can be

compared with it, so that all meaning is taken away from what is completely infinite. If no kind of essential difference can exist from eternity as the infinite's other, then the infinite can be in no way receptive of duality [the dyad]. For the essential monads coexist alongside one another, separate one from another, but otherness cannot exist without distinction, and if this is not transcended, then we have made no allowance for the nature of infinity. If the infinite, as has been shown, is not
B receptive of duality, then it is clearly not without beginning, as the monad is the beginning of every dyad. If it is not without beginning, then it is not unmoved, for it is moved from the monads in respect of unity, receiving being from them in respect of division. If it is not unmoved, then it is not the beginning of something else. For what is moved is not a beginning, but from a beginning, clearly from something that moves. Only the monad is properly speaking unmoved, because it is not number, nor numerable, nor numbered (for the monad is neither a part nor a whole nor a relation), and [only the monad] is properly speaking without beginning, because nothing is prior to it, from which, when moved, the monad receives being, and it is properly speaking infinite, because it is the cause of every number and everything numbered or
C numerable, as transcendent over every relation and every part and whole, and properly and truly and first and solely and simply, but all this, because the monad exists first and alone. And those who say this do not point to the blessed Godhead as it is, infinitely inaccessible in every kind of way to mind or reason or name and completely unapproachable, but we provide ourselves with a sound definition of our faith in [the Godhead], accessible to us and within our reach. For it is not as completely revealing of the divine and blessed being that the divine word uses this—I mean the name of monad—but as indicative of the complete simplicity of what is beyond all
D quantity and quality and every kind of relation, that we may know that it is not a whole made out of parts, or a part derived from a whole. For the Godhead is beyond all division and composition and part and whole, because one cannot say how much it is, or how it is arranged, or how it is, or what kind of being it is, for it is free from any kind of connection or property and is unbounded, and it is unrelated, with nothing before or after or alongside it, since it is beyond everything, and ranked with none of the things that exist in any kind of way at all.
1188A And it is in reference to this that the great and divine Denys says, 'Therefore the Godhead that is beyond all, and

distinguished from us or any other being, who is hymned as monad and triad, is neither monad nor triad, but in order that we may truly hymn the transcendent unity and divine fruitfulness, we name the one beyond every name with the divine names of triad and unity, and the one beyond being from things that are.'[108] No-one therefore who wishes to live reverently in the truth can say that the dyad or the multitude is in any way without beginning or in general the beginning of anything. The whole contemplative power and knowledge that is in accordance with reason and understanding reveals to everyone that there is one God, who exists beyond all infinity, and that he is not known at all to any being, but only through
B faith, and that it can be shown from his creatures that he is, but not when he is, and that he is the maker and fashioner of all eternity and time and of everything that exists in eternity and time, not that they are in any way conceived together with him from eternity, for it is known that none of the beings that exist alongside one another from eternity could be creative of any other. For it would be completely invalid and unacceptable, and ridiculous to those who have minds, to maintain that among those beings that possess being one could be creative of another. But it has been shown that from God, who eternally is, everything has come to be completely and wholly from nothing, not partially or incompletely, as proceeding wisely from a source that is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, and that everything is held together in it,
C as protected and supported in an all-powerful foundation, and that everything will return to it, as each to its own goal, as the great Denys the Areopagite has said somewhere.[109]

42
Contemplation of divine providence[110]

Anyone who is convinced that God exercises providence over the things that are, from which he has learnt that he exists, will
D judge it right and reasonable that he is none other than the guardian of the things that are and cares for them and that he alone is the fashioner of what is. For the permanence of what is, and its order and position and movement,[111] and the consonance of the extremities with the middle, the agreement of the parts with the wholes, and the union throughout of the wholes with the parts, and the unblurred distinction of the
1189A parts one from another in accordance with the individuating difference of each, and the unconfused union in accordance

with the indistinguishable sameness in the wholes, and the
combination and distinction of everything with everything else
(not to limit myself to particulars), and the eternally preserved
succession of everything and each one according to form, so
that the *logos* of each nature is not corrupted by confusion or
blurring—all this shows clearly that everything is held
together by the providence of the Creator God. For it is not the
case that God is good but not beneficent, or beneficent but
without providence, and therefore he cares wisely for the
things that are and in a way befitting God, so that they are
favoured with existence and care. Providence is, then,
according to the God- bearing Fathers,[112] the care that comes
B from God to the things that are. They also define it thus:
providence is the will of God through which everything that is
receives suitable direction. If this will is God's, if I may use the
very words of my teachers, then it necessarily follows that
what happens happens in accordance with right reason, and so
no better disposition could be looked for. One who has chosen
to take truth as his guide is therefore led to say that
providence is either the one who is truly known to be the
Creator or is a power exercised by the Creator of all things.
And with animals, if we approach them in a rational way we
shall find a trace of the intelligible in them which is a not
unworthy imitation of what is above reason. For if we look at
those beings that naturally care for their offspring, we are
encouraged to define for ourselves reverently and with godly
C boldness that God exercises providence in his sovereign
uniqueness over all beings, and not over some beings but not
others, as some of the adepts of the 'outer learning'[113] have it,
but of absolutely everything, in accordance with the one and
indistinguishable will of goodness, and indeed of both
universals and particulars, for we know that if particulars can
perish because they are not within the remit of providence and
fitting protection, then universals will perish with them (for
universals consist of particulars), in this way propounding a
rational demonstration that rightly leads by a reasonable
retort to the truth. For if universals consist of particulars, then
if the particular examples of any *logos* in accordance with
which things exist and consist should perish, then it is quite
D clear that the corresponding universals will not continue to be.
For the parts exist and subsist in the wholes, and the wholes
in the parts. No reason can gainsay it. But there are those who
are, as it were, unwillingly bound by the truth and betray the
power of providence, arguing that it only pervades what is

important to them. For they say that only universals are governed by providence,[114] and that particulars are hidden from providence, being led by necessity towards the truth that they are anxious to flee. For if they say that it is because of
1192A permanence that universals are worthy of providence, they admit even more strongly that those particulars are worthy, in which the permanence and stability of the universals consist. These are admitted together through the indissoluble natural relationship that they have with each other, and both conserve permanence, nor can one be said to be foreign to the protection of the other, and again if they admit the protection of the one with respect of permanence, they have to grant the other too. Apart from that there are three ways in which the providence of God is denied.[115] Some say that God does not understand the method of providence, others that he cannot will it, others that he has not the power. But it follows from the common notions[116] that God is good and beyond goodness and eternally wills what is good for everything, and that he is wise and
B beyond wisdom, or rather the source of all wisdom, and certainly knows everything that is going to happen, and that he is powerful, or rather infinitely powerful, and certainly brings about in a divinely fitting way in everything what is known to him and what he wills for the good and what is fitting. For God is good and wise and powerful, and pervades everything visible and invisible, both universals and particulars, both small and great, indeed everything that possesses existence in any way whatever. He is not diminished by the boundlessness of his goodness and wisdom and power, and conserves everything in accordance with the *logos* of its being, both in relation to themselves and to others, and in accordance with the indissoluble harmony and permanence that relates everything one to another. Why then can we not understand that nature
C itself teaches us clearly about the existence of God's providence over everything? For nature itself gives us no small proof that the knowledge of providence is naturally implanted within us, whenever it prepares us to seek salvation through prayers in sudden emergencies, as if pushing us towards God in an untaught way.[117] For seized by necessity, all unawares, without choice, before we have had a chance to think of anything, as if providence itself led us to itself without any thought, faster than any mental power within ourselves, placing before us the divine help as stronger than anything else. Not that nature leads us to the possession of something

unnatural. Whatever happens naturally, even if it is obscure
D to all, possesses the strong and unconquerable power of the
demonstration of the truth. If it is the case that the reason for
providence as it affects particulars is incomprehensible to us,
as in accordance with the verse, *his judgments are
unsearchable and his ways past finding out* (Rom. 11:33), then
in my view they are not right who say that it shows that there
is no such providence.[118] For if the difference and variation
between different human beings is great and
incomprehensible, in ways of life and customs and opinions
1193A and choices and desires, in what they know, and their needs
and pursuits, and the almost countless thoughts in their
minds, and in everything that happens to them in each day
and hour (for this animal, man, is changeable, sharp on
occasions and changing with need), it is absolutely necessary
that providence, comprehending everything with foresight in
the circumscription of its individuality, should be manifest as
different and manifold and complex, and should achieve
harmony as it extends into the incomprehensibility of the
multitudinous, in a way suitable to each individual, whether
thing or thought, reaching as far as the least movement of
mind or body. If therefore the difference of particulars is
incomprehensible, then likewise is the infinite meaning of
providence that draws them into harmony, but it should not
B follow that, since the meaning of particular providence happens
to be infinite and unknowable to us, we should make our
ignorance a ground for denying the all-wise care for the things
that are, but we should receive and hymn all the works of
providence simply and without examination, as divinely fitting
and suitable, and believe that what happens happens well,
even if the reason is beyond our grasp. And I mean all the
works of providence, not what happens by our agency in
accordance with our reason, for these are quite different from
the *logos* of providence. For the manner indicated by the great
teacher of the power and grace of the Saints, according to
reason and contemplation, is conjectural rather than
categorical (for our mind is very far from truth itself), but
C trying to get hold of what has been said with the reason, and
as it were tracking it down, I have done nothing more than
make suggestions.

43
Contemplation of passage beyond the material dyad

I understand the Saints to say that passing beyond the
material dyad,[119] on account of the unity the mind perceives in
the Trinity, means to find oneself beyond matter and form, in
which bodies consist, or beyond flesh and matter, for only
those who set these aside are worthy of being assimilated to
God and united to the most pure light, that is to say those
D who have set aside the relationship of the soul to the flesh, and
through the flesh to matter —or, to put it more generally,
those who have put off the natural conformity of sensible being
with what can be perceived through the senses and genuinely
acquired a desire for God alone, on account, as I said, of the
unity the mind perceives in the Trinity. For they know that
the soul is a middle being between God and matter and has
powers that can unite it with both, that is, it has a mind that
links it with God and senses that link it with matter. When
they have completely shaken off the senses and everything
perceived through them by means of the activity that relates
and inclines it to them, their soul can be ineffably assimilated
to God by means of the mind alone, and wholly united to him
1196A alone ineffably, so that possessing the image of the archetype
according to the likeness in mind and reason and spirit,[120]
they can behold the resemblance so far as is possible, and
learn in a hidden manner the unity understood in the Trinity.
Or perhaps the teacher called the incensive and desiring parts
[of the soul] the material dyad, because they are powers of the
soul that incline towards matter and together form the
passionate part of the soul and struggle against the rational
part, and can scatter the mind into multiplicity, unless from
the beginning it is skilfully compelled to submit to [the mind's]
yoke. And if anyone can overcome these powers and force them,
as they ought, to support the mind, by yoking them like a
slave to the power of reason, or if anyone can completely set
B them aside, and if alone through reason and contemplation
cleave to the unwavering enchantment of knowledge that
operates through love, and be drawn to the movement of that
power, most masculine in desire, that is one and single and
pure of all multiplicity and simple and undivided (for
philosophers know that in God there is stability in identity of
eternal movement), then such a one is truly blessed. He has
attained not only true and blessed union with the Holy

Trinity, but also the unity that the mind perceives in the Holy Trinity. He has become potentially simple and undivided and of a single form compared with that which is in essence simple and undivided. And he imitates so far as is possible through the habit of the virtues the goodness he thus possesses, and has put aside the individuality of the naturally separated
C powers because of the grace of the united God.

44
Exposition of the passionate part of the soul[121]

For the passionate part of the soul is divided, they say, into that which is obedient to reason and that which cannot be persuaded by it. That which cannot be persuaded by it is divided into the nourishing part, which some call the natural, and the natural part, which some call the living part—neither of these can be persuaded to be led by reason. It is called 'not obedient to reason', since it is not naturally led by reason. For to grow, and to be healthy, and to live is not within our power.[122] That which is obedient to reason is divided into two: the desiring and the incensive. They call it 'obedient to reason', since it is natural in those who are serious[123] to be led
D by and to submit oneself to reason. Again the desiring part is divided into pleasure and grief. Desire that attains its object works pleasure, desire that fails of its object works grief. And again they say that desire can be divided in another way, making four kinds together with itself: desire, pleasure, fear and grief. And since everything that is is either good or evil, and either present or to come, a good that is anticipated is called desire, one that is present pleasure, and again an evil anticipated is called fear, and one present called grief. And in
1197A another way what is good can either be really so or simply be thought to be so, and this gives pleasure and desire, and in the case of evils grief and fear. And again they divide grief into four: distress, depression, envy and mercy. And they say distress is grief that causes speechlessness in those whom it affects, because of the depths into which it drags down the rational part; depression is grief that weighs down and causes annoyance at unwanted circumstances; envy is grief at another's goods; mercy is grief at another's evils. And they say that all grief is in its own nature an evil. For even if one who is serious grieves at another's evils, in mercy, this is not his primary intention and a matter of deliberate purpose, but rather a reaction to circumstances. The contemplative endures

all these things dispassionately, holding himself to God, and
B distancing himself from what is present to him. Fear again they divide into six: alarm, shame, disgrace, consternation, panic and anxiety. And they say that alarm is fear of some approaching action, shame fear of anticipated blame, disgrace fear on account of having done something dishonourable, consternation fear of some great imagination, panic fear of terrible rumours that deprive one of sense, and anxiety fear of falling, that is of failure. For when one fears one struggles in the grip of failure. Some also call it timidity. And again they say that the incensive power is the warmth of the blood surrounding the heart through the longing to inflict grief in return. They divide this into three: into anger, which some call bitterness and revenge, and resentment, and rancour. And
C they say that anger is the incensive power stirred to activity that has a beginning and an end, or simply the incensive power stirred up; bitterness is the reaction to another causing grief; revenge is the punishment meted out by the one grieved to the one who caused grief; resentment is the incensive power grown old;[124] and rancour is the incensive power biding its time for vengeance.[125] They divide each of these into many others. And if anyone wanted to give an accurate account of all this in writing, he would collect a lot of arguments and expend a great deal of time, so that in the end it would be more than his readers could bear for quantity. It is therefore a truly great and wonderful thing and worth all attention and effort, and in
D need before all else of divine help, to make it possible first of all to rule over the material dyad of implanted powers, I mean the incensive and desiring powers, and their several divisions, and blessed is he who is able and ready to lead them by reason, to the point of cleansing their activity of previous trains of thought through ethical philosophy.

1200A

45
Contemplation of the addition to Abraham's name[126]

Thereupon that great man Abraham, in Hagar and Ishmael, transcended [the material dyad, i.e., the passionate part of the soul] and completely rejected it, and with Isaac had already stripped the rational part [of his soul] naked so that it was able to entertain visions concerning the divine. He learnt from the divine voice borne to his understanding, that there can be no divine offspring in the mind of the free understanding in

the spirit, if it is attached to the enslaved seed of the flesh, but that it can happen by the blessed promise, that is, the grace of deification laid up in hope for those who love the Lord, which
B already exists figuratively and can be received in advance. By faith he was hiddenly assimilated to the reason concerning the monad, according to which he came to have the form of unity, or rather out of many was made one, magnificently and wholly drawn up alone to God alone,[127] bearing on him no trace at all of knowledge of any of the scattered things, which shows, I think, the power of the One who granted him the addition to his name of the letter alpha.[128] Therefore he has been given the name of father of all those who approach God in faith by depriving themselves of everything that is after God, who, through possessing the same features of faith in the spirit, bear a resemblance as children to their father.

46
Contemplation of Moses' removal of his sandals

At the beginning of his way of knowledge, when he approached to see the light that hiddenly appeared in the bush, this is what that great man Moses was taught by the divine voice, which said, *Loose the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground* (Exod. 3:5): he marvellously learnt, I think, to set his soul free from any inclination towards bodily things, for it was about to be made the way through contemplation to the spiritual understanding of what is beyond the world and through the putting off of sandals to have a perfect change from the former life related to the flesh.

47
Contemplation of the parts of the sacrifice

And equally again this is what the same most divine Moses
D indicates in the arrangements for the sacred sacrifices, when he orders the fat, the kidneys, breast and the lobe of the liver to be cut off,[129] that the principal powers of the passions that are in us, I mean the incensive and desiring parts, that is the real material dyad, and their activities, are to be cut off and melted away in the divine fire of the hidden power of knowledge. For the desiring part is indicated by the kidneys, and its activity, that is pleasure, by the fat, the incensive part
1201A by the breast, and its activity by the lobe of the liver, in which

bitter and most acrid bile is found.

48
Contemplation of the different forms of leprosy according to the law[130]

And again this is what I think is wisely suggested in the place concerning leprosy through symbolic riddles. The disease of leprosy is divided into four kinds by colour: white, green, yellow and dim. Through these the incensive and desiring powers divided into their kinds are indicated, the desiring part by the white and green, clearly divided into pleasure and grief, and the incensive part by the yellow and dim, divided into anger and resentment and the hidden malice of hypocrisy.
B These are the principal kinds of the passions and the absolutely original offspring of the incensive and desiring powers, by which the soul is diseased and, so long as it is spotted with them, is not to be numbered among those worthy of the divine company.

49
Contemplation of Phinees

And this is what *I* think is suggested by the story of the wonderful Phinees and his zeal.[131] When he strikes down the Midianite woman together with the Israelite with his spear, the hidden meaning is that matter should be expelled together with form, and desire with the incensive power, and foreign pleasure with the empassioned train of thought, by the power of reason, the high- priest, from the soul completely. For form
C provides matter a way of being, as the incensive power does to desire, by approaching it giving movement to something that by itself is unmoved, and so does a train of thought to pleasure, giving form to something that by its own nature exists without form or shape. And this makes clear the power of names. For the Midianite woman was called Chasbi, which means *tickling my fancy,* and the Israelite Zambri, which means *my song,* that is uplifting.[132] Since then the rational part of the soul has turned away from meditation of the divine and from gazing on him, and, lifted up by the material tickling of the flesh, has become entangled in the furnace of sin, there is need for the
D zealous high-priest, reason, to destroy those that are wickedly entangled with each other, and to turn aside the wrath of God that is bearing down.

50
Contemplation of: *Do not give what is holy to dogs* (Matt. 7:6)

And this the Lord himself perhaps meant, so it seems to me, when he said, *Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw*
1204A *pearls before swine,* calling the intellectual part within us holy as well, as being a reflection of the divine glory, which he commands should not wickedly be disturbed by the barking of movements of the incensive [part of the soul], and calling its divine and radiant thoughts pearls, which form a noble adornment, which he commands must be kept uncontaminated and free from the unclean passions of material desire. And in the words addressed to his disciples when he sent them out to preach, about how they were to be well-equipped and simple—*Take no bag for your journey, nor a staff, nor sandals for your feet*[133]—he meant that one who sets out on the lofty path of
B knowledge must be free from every material weight, and pure from every impassioned inclination of the incensive or desiring powers, as is made clear by the bag and the staff, which indicate desire and the incensive part, and especially that he should be stripped of the malice of hypocrisy, which covers, as it were, the track of life after the manner of sandals, and hide the impassioned part of the soul with the pretence of moderation. The Pharisees clothed themselves with hypocrisy, in the form of piety, but without possessing piety, and when they thought to hide [their lack], they were shown up, convicted by reason.[134]

51
Contemplation of the epileptic[135]

C It was, I think, from this material dyad, by which I mean the incensive and desiring powers, that again the Lord freed the epileptic, or rather he attacked and rendered impotent the mad rage of the demon who wanted him to perish in the fire of the incensive part and the water of desire (for in human beings who have yielded to material things their relation to increase and decrease in no way differs from that of the moon).[136] For the demon who has seized [the soul] and attacks and disturbs it with the water of desire and the fire of the incensive power, strangling the mind, will not cease, until the Word of God arrives and drives away the wicked and material spirit (which characterizes the old and earthly man), and frees

the one who has been possessed by wicked tyranny, giving
D and granting him natural soundness of mind, through which is
manifest the new man created according to God. So therefore
all the Saints who have genuinely received the divine and
unerring word have passed through this age, supporting the
path of the soul by none of the pleasures to be found in it.
Those who gaze intently on the highest attributes *(logoi)*
concerning God that are accessible to men, by which I mean
his goodness and his love, from which they learn that God is
moved to give to what exists being and to grant to them well-
being (if it is permitted to speak of movement in respect of God
the sole unmoved, and not rather of willing, which moves
1205A everything and draws it and holds it in being, while being in
no way moved itself).[137] And those who wisely model
themselves on these easily bear through the virtues the
peculiar nature, made manifest, of the concealed and invisible
beauty of the divine magnificence. Therefore they have become
good, loving both God and men, compassionate and full of pity,
showing that they possess one disposition of love towards
every kind of being, by which, through the whole of their lives,
they hold fast to the form of the virtues *par excellence, I* mean
humility.[138] Now humility is a firm safeguard of all that is
good, undermining everything that is opposed to it, and not at
all easily beguiled by wearying temptations, both those that
attack us through the consent of our will and are thus within
B our control, and those that bypass our will and are not, by
making rebellious attacks waste away through continence, and
shaking off the approach [of temptation] through patience. So
attacked from either side, by glory and by dishonour, they
remain unshaken, holding themselves unmoved on either side,
neither wounded by insolence through voluntary relaxation,
nor admitting glory through an excessive propensity to
poverty. They allow nothing to rule over them, neither anger,
nor envy,nor rivalry, nor hypocrisy, nor cunning, nor a certain
feigned and wily affection seducing another by a seeming
pretence through deceit—which is the most destructive of all
the passions—nor desire for things in this life that seem to be
magnificent, nor any other of the wicked multitude of
passions, nor threats held over them by enemies, nor any form
C of death. Therefore they are rightly judged to be blessed both
by God and by men, because, by the grace of the great gift of
God, they have become manifest images of the radiant,
ineffable and evident glory. Therefore they rejoice are made
one by the acknowledged *logoi* of the virtues, or rather by God,

for whose sake they die daily and persevere to the end. In him the *logoi* of all good things, as in an ever-bubbling spring, pre-exist in accordance with the one, simple and unique embracing of all things, and they draw to him all those who use well and naturally the powers given them for this purpose.

DIFFICULTY 41

INTRODUCTION

The forty-first of the early *Difficulties* unites two of Maximus' favourite themes. It is inspired by a famous and influential passage from one of St Gregory of Nazianzus' sermons for the feast we now call the Holy Theophany (or, in the West, Epiphany) of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'and natures are instituted afresh, and God becomes man'. It is a passage Maximus often quotes, when he is considering the Incarnation of Christ. Its influence can be seen in the way it has been taken up in the liturgical tradition, both in the East and in the West. These words are incorporated in the first *sticheron* of the Aposticha sung at Vespers at the end of Christmas Day: 'Today there is brought about an astounding mystery: natures are instituted afresh, and God becomes man! What he was, he remains, what he was not, he assumes, without suffering mixture or division.' This *sticheron,* translated in Latin, became in the Roman Office (and still remains) the antiphon of the Benedictus for the Feast of the Circumcision (now the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God, Mary): *Mirabile mysterium declaratur hodie; Innovantur naturae; Deus homo factus est…*

The other great Maximian theme developed in this *Difficulty* is that of the division of being (already discussed above, in chapter 5 of the Introduction): for the overcoming of the division of being (that is, not its destruction, but the overcoming of its divisive and destructive potentialities) is what has been accomplished by the reinstitution of natures. The theme of the division of being is drawn by Maximus from St Gregory of Nyssa. As he develops the theme in this *Difficulty,* he draws on another theme of Gregory's, that of the double creation of the human person. For the final division of being is, for Maximus, human sexual differentiation, and as he expounds this he draws on Gregory's exposition of the theme of double creation, especially in his treatise, *On human creation.*

The structure of the *Difficulty* is straightforward. After introducing the theme of the division of being, he shows how the human person has been created to hold together these divisions of being, which are all reflected in the human constitution. The human person is therefore to be regarded as a microcosm and bond of creation, mediating between all the divisions. But because of the Fall, the human person can no longer fulfil this function. Therefore, in the Incarnation, God has recapitulated the cosmic role of human beings and restored to them their primordial function. Maximus then paraphrases this in the terminology of logic, citing a passage from the *Divine Names* of Denys the Areopagite in support. At the end of the *Difficulty* is a brief exposition of the passage from Gregory Nazianzen that confines itself to the reinstitution of natures in the Incarnation.

TEXT[1]

1304D From the same sermon:

'And natures are instituted afresh, and God becomes man.'[2]

The saints have received the many divine mysteries from *those who became* attendants *and ministers of the word* (Luke 1:2), and were immediately initiated into knowledge of reality in accordance with the tradition passed down to them from those before them. They say that the substance of everything that has come into being is divided into five divisions.[3] The first of these divides from the uncreated nature the universal created nature, which receives its being from becoming. For they say that God in his goodness has made the radiant orderly
1305A arrangement of everything that is, and that it is not immediately plain what and how it is, and that therefore the division that divides creation from God is to be called ignorance. For what it is that naturally divides these one from another, so that they may not be united in a single essence, since they do not have one and the same *logos,* they grant to be ineffable. The second division is that in accordance with which the whole nature that receives being from creation is divided by God into that which is perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses. The third is that in accordance with which the nature perceived by the senses is divided into heaven and earth. The fourth is that in accordance with which the earth is divided into paradise and the inhabited world [the *oikoumenê*], and the fifth, that in accordance with which the human person, which is the laboratory in which everything is

concentrated and in itself naturally mediates between the
B extremities of each division, having been drawn into everything in a good and fitting way through becoming, is divided into male and female.

For humanity clearly has the power of naturally uniting at the mean point of each division since it is related to the extremities of each division in its own parts. Through that capacity it can come to be the way of fulfilment of what is divided and be openly instituted in itself as the great mystery of the divine purpose. It proceeds harmoniously to each of the extremities in the things that are, from what is close at hand to what is remote, from what is worse to what is better, lifting up to God and fully accomplishing union. For this reason the human person was introduced last among beings,[4] as a kind of natural bond[5] mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things
C that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval.[6]

In order to bring about the union of everything with God as its cause, the human person begins first of all with its own division, and then, ascending through the intermediate steps by order and rank, it reaches the end of its high ascent, which passes through all things in search of unity, to God, in whom there is no division. It accomplishes this by shaking off every natural property of sexual differentiation into male and female by the most dispassionate relationship to divine virtue. This sexual differentiation clearly depends in no way on the primordial reason behind the divine purpose concerning human generation.[7] Thus it is shown to be and becomes simply a human person in accordance with the divine purpose, no longer divided by being called male or female. It is no longer
D separated as it now is into parts, and it achieves this through the perfect knowledge, as I said, of its own *logos,* in accordance with which it is.[8] Then, by a way of life proper and fitting to Saints, the human person unites paradise and the inhabited world to make one earth, no longer is it experienced as divided according to the difference of its parts, but rather as gathered together, since no introduction at all of partition is allowed. Then, through a life identical in every way through virtue with that of the angels,[9] so far as is possible to human beings, the human person unites heaven and earth, making the whole of creation perceived through the senses one with itself and un
1308A divided, not dividing it spatially by intervals in any way, since the human person has become as subtle as spirit and is

no longer tied to earth by any bodily weight. Nor is it obstructed in its ascent to the heavens thanks to the perfect invisibility to these things of the mind that is genuinely hastening towards God, and wisely stretches out towards him step by step, as on an ordinary path, naturally overcoming any obstacles that stand in its way. And then the human person unites what is perceived by the mind and what is perceived by the senses with each other by achieving equality with the angels in its manner of knowing, and thus makes the whole creation one single creation, no longer divided by what it can know and what it cannot know, through its equality to the angels lacking nothing in their knowledge and understanding of the *logoi* in the things that exist, according to which the
B infinite pouring out of the gift of true wisdom inviolably and without intermediary furnishes, so far as is permitted, to those who are worthy a concept of God beyond understanding or explanation. And finally, beyond all these, the human person unites the created nature with the uncreated through love (O the wonder of God's love for us human beings!), showing them to be one and the same through the possession of grace, the whole [creation] wholly interpenetrated[10] by God, and become completely whatever God is, save at the level of being, and receiving to itself the whole of God himself, and acquiring as a kind of prize for its ascent to God the most unique God himself, as the end of the movement of everything that moves towards it, and the firm and unmoved rest of everything that
C is carried towards it, being the undetermined and infinite limit and definition of every definition and law and ordinance, of reason and mind and nature.

Since then the human person is not moved naturally, as it was fashioned to do, around the unmoved, that is its own beginning (I mean God), but contrary to nature is voluntarily moved in ignorance around those things that are beneath it, to which it has been divinely subjected, and since it has abused the natural power of uniting what is divided, that was given to it at its generation, so as to separate what is united, therefore 'natures have been instituted afresh', and in a paradoxical
D way beyond nature that which is completely unmoved by nature is moved immovably around that which by nature is moved, and God becomes a human being, in order to save lost humanity. Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of the all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes

about, and thus he fulfils the great purpose of God the Father, *to recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself* (Eph. 1:10), *in whom everything has been created* (Col. 1:16). Indeed being in himself the universal union of all, he has
1309A started with our division and become the perfect human being, having from us, on our account, and in accordance with our nature, everything that we are and lacking nothing, *apart from sin* (Heb. 4:15), and having no need of the natural intercourse of marriage. In this way he showed, I think, that there was perhaps another way, foreknown by God, for human beings to increase, if the first human being had kept the commandment and not cast himself down to an animal state by abusing his own proper powers. Thus God-made-man has done away with the difference and division of nature into male and female, which human nature in no way needed for generation, as some hold, and without which it would perhaps have been possible.[11] There was no necessity for these things to have lasted forever. *For in Christ Jesus,* says the divine
B Apostle, *there is neither male nor female* (Gal. 3:28). Then having sanctified the world we inhabit by his own humanly-fitting way of life he opened a clear way into paradise after his death, as, without a lie, he promised the thief, *Today, you will be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43). Then, since there was for him no longer any difference between paradise and the world we inhabit, he again made this clear to his disciples when he was with them after his resurrection from the dead, showing that the world is one and is not divided in itself, preserving the *logos* in accordance with which it exists free from any division caused by difference. Then by his ascension into heaven, he clearly united heaven and earth, and with his earthly body that is of the same nature and con substantial with ours he
C entered into heaven and showed that the whole nature that can be perceived through the senses is, by the most universal *logos* of its being, one, thus obscuring the peculiar nature of the division which cuts it into two. Then, in addition to this, by passing with his soul and body, that is, with the whole of our nature, through all the divine and intelligible ranks of heaven, he united the sensible and the intelligible and showed the convergence of the whole of creation with the One according to its most original and universal *logos,* which is completely undivided and at rest in itself. And finally, considered in his humanity, he goes to God himself, having clearly *appeared,* as it is written, *in the presence of God* the Father *on our behalf*

(Heb. 9:24), as a human being. As Word, he cannot be
D separated in any way at all from the Father; as man, he has fulfilled, in word and truth, with unchangeable obedience, everything that, as God, he has predetermined is to take place, and has accomplished the whole will of God the Father on our behalf. For we had ruined by misuse the power that had been naturally given us from the beginning for this purpose. First he united us in himself by removing the difference between male and female, and instead of men and women, in
1312A whom above all this manner of division is beheld, he showed us as properly and truly to be simply human beings, thoroughly transfigured in accordance with him, and bearing his intact and completely unadulterated image, touched by no trace at all of corruption. With us and through us he encompasses the whole creation through its intermediaries and the extremities through their own parts. He binds about himself each with the other, tightly and indissolubly, paradise and the inhabited world, heaven and earth, things sensible and things intelligible, since he possesses like us sense and soul and mind, by which, as parts, he assimilates himself by each of the extremities to what is universally akin to each in the previously mentioned manner. Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed
B by the gathering together of its parts one with another in itself, and inclined towards itself by the whole of its existence, in accordance with the one, simple, undifferentiated and indifferent idea of production from nothing, in accordance with which the whole of creation admits of one and the same undiscriminated *logos,* as having not been before it is.

For in their true *logos* all beings have at least something in common one with another. Amongst the beings after God, which have their being from God through generation, there are no exceptions, neither the greatly honoured and transcendent beings which have a universal relationship to the One absolutely beyond any relation, nor is the least honoured among beings destitute and bereft since it has by nature a generic relationship to the most honoured beings.[12] For all
C those things that are distinguished one from another by their particular differences are united by their universal and common identities, and forced together to the one and the same by a certain natural generic *logos,* so that the various kinds are united one with another according to their essence, and possess the one and the same and the undivided. For

nothing of what is universal and containing [others] and generic can be divided into what is partial and contained and particular. For that is no longer generic which does not naturally unite what is separated, but which, participating in their separation, departs from its own singular unity. For everything generic, according to its own *logos,* is wholly present, indivisibly by the mode of unity, to those subordinate
D wholes, and the particular as a whole is considered as within the genus. The species, considered according to the genus, are released as it were from the variety caused by difference, and find identity one with another. The individuals, considered according to the species, finding agreement one with another, are in every way constituted as identical one with another, being indistinguishable from their same nature and free from any difference. Finally the accidents, brought together one with another by the substance in which they inhere, possess unity, not being scattered at all by their substance. And the unerring witness of all this is the true theologian, the great and holy Denys the Areopagite, in the chapter on the Perfect
1313A and the One in the *Divine Names,* where he speaks thus: 'For multiplicity is not without participation in the One, but that which is many in its parts is one as a whole, and that which is many in its accidents is one in the subject, and that which is many in number or potentialities is one in species, and that which is many in species is one in genus, and that which is many in its processions is one in its source, and there is none of the beings that is without participation in the One.'[13] And simply, to speak concisely, the *logoi* of everything that is divided and particular are contained, as they say, by the *logoi* of what is universal and generic, and the most universal and generic *logoi* are held together by wisdom, and the *logoi* of the particulars, held fast in various ways by the generic *logoi* are contained by sagacity, in accordance with
B which they are first simplified, and releasing the symbolic variety in the actions of their subjects, they are unified by wisdom, receiving congruence making for identity from the more generic. For the wisdom and sagacity of God the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ, who holds together the universals of beings by the power of wisdom, and embraces their complementary parts by the sagacity of understanding, since by nature he is the fashioner and provider of all, and through himself draws into one what is divided, and abolishes war between beings, and binds everything into peaceful friendship and undivided harmony, *both what is in heaven and what is on*

earth (Col. 1:20), as the divine Apostle says.

C **Another contemplation of this difficulty**

Again 'the natures are instituted afresh'. The divine, through its measureless goodness and love for humankind and by its will, in a way beyond nature voluntarily accepted our fleshly birth, and, paradoxically, without seed, tilled our flesh, endowed with a rational soul: for God became flesh by a strange ordinance contrary to nature, being in every way the same and indistinguishable from us save for sin, and what is more paradoxical, the virginity of her who became a mother through the birth was in no way cancelled. For there is truly a fresh institution not only in that God the Word, who had already been ineffably born without beginning from God the Father, was born in time according to the flesh, but also that our nature gave flesh without seed, and a virgin gave birth
D without corruption. For both cases show that there is manifested a fresh institution, since in each case the reason in accordance with which it took place is completely concealed as ineffable and unknown: the one takes place in a manner beyond nature and knowledge, and the other by the word of faith, by which everything that is beyond nature and knowledge is natur ally achieved. So therefore, so it seems to
1316A me, the difficulty is resolved, and I do not know how else it could be done. Therefore let what has been said be approved by your philosophy or let something better be searched out and declared by you and there be communicated to me the fruit of lofty knowledge not touched by anything earthly.

DIFFICULTY 71

INTRODUCTION

This is the last of the early collection of *Difficulties,* and differs from the rest in being uniquely on a passage from one of Gregory Nazianzen's poems, rather than on a passage from his sermons. Gregory's couplet on the 'high Word' playing 'in every kind of form' recalls the similar imagery, used to rather different purpose, by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> For Christ plays in ten thousand places, Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.[1]

This *Difficulty* provides a striking example of Maximus' tendency (already seen in *Amb.* 10.17, 31b–e) to interpret the Dionysian categories of apophatic and cataphatic theology in terms of the Incarnation. This is developed in the first meditation he offers on the couplet from Gregory's poem. Maximus goes on to offer several other interpretations. First, another Christological interpretation that sees the 'play of the Word' like the weaving about of a wrestler, so that the paradox of 'divine play' is interpreted by another paradox, that of 'still flowing', understood as a holding to the middle, in an active, agile way: this interpretation should be compared with the way in which Maximus talks of the Word in the Incarnation fulfilling the mediatorial, microcosmic role of humanity in *Amb.* 41, above. This play is also compared to the way in which parents come down to the level of their children, with the intention of educating them through play. The last two interpretations offered compare play to the shifting character of the world in which we live: such play is again pedagogic, and leads us to higher, unchanging reality.

TEXT

1408C Of the same, from his songs:

> The high Word plays in every kind of form, mixing, as he wills, with his world here and there.[2]

When the great David, in accordance with faith alone in the spirit, directed his mind through the latches, as it were, of the phenomena towards the intelligible, he received from the divine wisdom a certain trace of the mysteries for which
D human beings long, then, I think, he said, *Abyss calls to abyss in the noise of your cataracts* (Psa. 41:8). By this he perhaps shows that every contemplative mind, because of its invisible nature and the depth and multitude of its thoughts, is to be compared to an abyss, since it passes beyond the ordered array of the phenomena and comes to the place of intelligible reality. Or again, when in faith by the vehemence of its movement it passes beyond what is fitting, and comes to rest in itself, in
1409A every way fixed and unmoved, because it has passed beyond everything, then it necessarily calls upon the divine wisdom, which to the understanding is really and truly the unfathomable abyss, to give to it the noise of the divine cataracts, but not the cataracts themselves, as it asks to receive in faith a certain trace of knowledge of the ways of divine providence concerning the universe. Through this it will be able to remember *God from the land of Jordan and Hermon* (Psa. 41:7), in which was accomplished the great and dreadful mystery in the flesh of the divine descent to the human level of God the Word. In that mystery the truth of piety towards God is given to human beings, which transcends any natural order and capacity. The divine Paul, the great Apostle, who is both an initiate himself and initiates others in the divine and
B secretly-known wisdom, calls [this mystery] the foolishness of God and his weakness, because, I think, of its transcendent wisdom and power; the great and divinely-minded Gregory calls it play, because of its transcendent prudence.[3] For Paul says, *The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men* (1 Cor. 1:25); while Gregory says, 'The high Word plays in every kind of form, mixing, as he wills, with his world here and there.' Each, by privation of what with us are most powerful attributes, points to what the divine possesses, and by negations of what is ours makes affirmation of the divine.[4] For with us foolishness,

weakness and play are privations, of wisdom, power and
C prudence, respectively, but when they are attributed to God they clearly mean excess of wisdom, power and prudence. What with us counts as privation, with God is certainly rightly taken to mean possession; while what with us counts as possession, with God is most fittingly taken to mean privation by excess. For the transcendent attributes of the divine, spoken of by us in a contrary sense as privations, fall a long way short of their true meaning. If this in its normal sense is true (for the divine never agrees with the human), then the mystery of the divine Incarnation is called the foolishness and weakness of God according to the holy Apostle Paul, and God's play according
D to the wonderful and great teacher Gregory, since it oversteps in a way that transcends being every order and harmony of all nature and power and energy. This the most divine David beheld from afar and in this he was initiated at the level of mind through the divine Spirit, so that he expressed beforehand the apostolic interpretation of the transcendent possession of God through privation, calling out (I think with reference to the Jews), *In the multitude of your power your enemies will lie about you* (Psa. 65:3). For every human being is certainly an enemy of God and clearly established as a liar who ignorantly and irreverently includes God in the law of nature and has not begun to believe that he who is serenely beyond nature in reality came among those who are subject to nature and is able to fill with power the whole of nature. Thus
1412A from one point of view reason dares in a conjectural way[5] to behold the foolishness, the weakness and the play of God, by a digression in which it seeks a provisional interpretation of the difficulty before us, and reason takes the *abyss calling to abyss in the noise of* the divine *cataracts* to be the mind that reaches after knowledge and calls upon wisdom, and thus discerns a tiny reflection of the mysteries of the divine and ineffable descent among us. For the abyss and the place of the abyss are called by the same name, and thus the pure mind is established as the place of divine wisdom. Thus the mind is called abyss because of its capacity, and again wisdom is given the same name because of its nature.

B

Another contemplation of the same

With the help of divine grace, looking in another way at the difficulty before us—by way of conjecture[6] rather than categorical assertion (for the one is modest, the other reckless)

—we dare to take the Word before us and say that the play of God spoken of by the great teacher is a kind of keeping to the middle, staying equidistant from the extremes, by weaving about and quickly changing one's position, or, to put it better, by a flowing that remains still. And this is the paradox: to behold stillness eternally flowing and being carried away, a flowing, eternally-moving, divinely contrived to contribute
C providentially to the improvement of the whole divine economy, capable of making wise those who are taught by it to hope always for change, and to believe that the end of this mystery for them is that by an inclination towards God they might be securely deified by grace. By the middle I mean the totality of things visible which now surround the human being or in which the human is; by the extremes I mean the reality of everything not manifest and which is going unfailingly to surround humanity, things that have properly and truly been made and come into being in accordance with the ineffable and preeminent purpose and reason of the divine goodness.[7] Just as the wise Preacher with the great and clear eye of the soul caught a glimpse of the coming into being of visible and
D flowing things and, as in a vision, of their being made and coming into being, and said, *What is this that has been? It is the same as that which is going to be. And what is this that has been made? It is the same as that which is going to be made* (Eccles. 1:9). Clearly he has in mind the first and the last things, as those which are themselves and truly are, and also the middle things, that pass away and are never in the same place. For when the teacher has come to an end of speaking grandiosely of a certain kind of living things and of stones, and of simply speaking boundlessly of the many things that can been seen in beings,[8] he adds 'The high Word plays in every
1413A kind of form, mixing, as he wills, with his world here and there.' Is it not therefore the same as what he says in his sermon on Holy Pentecost about divinity and created nature? 'As long as each nature remains on its own, the one in its majesty, the other in its lowliness, his goodness remains unmixed and his love for human kind unshared, and there is a great gulf in the middle that cannot be crossed, which not only separates the rich man from Lazarus and the longed-for bosom of Abraham,[9] but also every nature that has come to be and is in a state of flux from that nature which has not come to be and is immutable.'[10] Somewhat similar to this is what the great divine preacher Denys the Areopagite says: 'We must dare to add this as being no less true: that the source of all

things himself, in his wonderful and good love for all things, through the excess of his loving goodness, is carried outside
B himself, in his providential care for all that is, so enchanted is he in goodness and love and longing. Removed from his position above all and beyond all, he decends to be in all according to an ecstatic and transcendent power which is yet inseparable from Himself.'[11] Perhaps, then, as I said, from these passages we may find a way of interpreting 'The high Word plays'. To use examples from things we are familiar with to explain matters that are above us: it is like parents helping their children, and out of indulgence seeming to take part in their childish games. They play with nuts and dice, or prepare for them many-coloured flowers, and clothes dipped in colours
C that enchant the senses, and play hide and seek, or are astonished, as if they had nothing else to do than play at children's games. But after a while they lead their children on further, and begin to share with them more perfect reason and their own concerns. So perhaps in these words the teacher is saying that God who is above all leads us through the historical nature, so to speak, of the appearance of created things to amazement and a kind of ascent through contemplation and knowledge of them, rather in the way in which we care for children, and then introduces the contemplation of the more spiritual meaning *[logos]* within these things, and finally leads us by way of theology up to the most hidden knowledge of himself, so far as this is possible, in
D the early stages purifying us from everything that has form or quality or shape or quantity, whether of multitude or size, and from variety or composition, so that we may reach the goal of contemplation—and this is called 'playing' by the God-bearing Gregory, and 'enchanting' or 'being carried outside himself' by the God-bearing Denys.[12]

What is present and apparent, compared with that which
1416A properly and truly is and will be manifest at the end, seems to be simply play. For just as the order of things present and visible, compared with the truth of properly divine and primordial things, could not at all be thought to be in any way capable of sharing the splendour of the divine beauty, so play, compared with anything true and real, could not be thought to exist at all.

Another contemplation of the same

Perhaps 'play' refers to the liability to change of the material things to which we entrust ourselves, which are shifting and
B changing and possess no stable basis, apart from that of their primary meaning *[logos],* in accordance with which they are carried along wisely and providentially and could be thought to be ruled by us. But otherwise, rather than being ruled by us, they evade us, and either seem to be ruled by our desires, or frustrate them, and can neither rule nor be ruled, since, possessing no stable definition of their own being, they are in a state of flux and have no stability. Perhaps it is this that was appropriately called God's play by the teacher, as if through these things he would draw us to that which really is and can never be shaken.

Another contemplation of the same

C What about ourselves? If, in accordance with the prevailing sequence of our nature in the present, now like the rest of living beings on the earth, we first come into being as children, then in the manner of flowers that fade early hasten from youth to shrivelled old age to die, and are transferred to another life, then not implausibly are we said to be 'God's play' by this God-bearing teacher. For in comparison with the archetype that is to come of the divine and true life, our present life is play, and everything that is other than that is lacking in being. This is shown most clearly in the funeral sermon for Caesarius, as he says, 'Such is our life, brothers, the passing life of living beings: a sort of play upon the earth.
D As those that have not been, we come into being, and having come into being we are dissolved. We are a dream that does not last, a passing phantom, the flight of a bird that is gone, a ship passing through the sea and leaving no trace, dust, vapour, the morning dew, a flower that blooms for a time and is gone, *man, his days are like grass, like the grass of the field, he flourishes* (Psa. 102:15), as the divine David says as he reflects on our weakness.'[13]

DIFFICULTY 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the second collection of *Difficulties*. It discusses passages from two of Gregory Nazianzen's sermons, which speak of movement from the monad, beyond the dyad, to rest in the triad. Maximus' problem is that Gregory seems to be speaking of movement within the eternal Trinity, which to Maximus is inconceivable. Maximus skirts this implication by explaining the movement as movement (of thought) in the mind that considers the mystery of the Trinity. The *Difficulty* is also notable for the way in which Maximus deploys his developed distinction between being and existence (see above, chapter 4 of the Introduction) in a Trinitarian context.

TEXT

1033D From Saint Gregory the Theologian's first Sermon on the Son:

> Therefore the monad is eternally moved towards the dyad until it reaches the triad [or, Trinity].[1]

1036A And again from his second[2] Sermon on Peace:

> The monad is moved because of its wealth and the dyad is superseded; for beyond matter and form, out of which bodies are made, the triad is defined on account of its perfection.[3]

If there seems to be disharmony, servant of God, and you are puzzled about the true harmony, it is not to be sought according to the simplest meaning of the words. For it is the same for the dyad to be superseded and not to stop until the dyad, and again for the triad to be defined is the same as to

stop the movement of the monad at the triad, if we respect a monarchy that is not indifferent to status, as if it were circumscribed by one person, nor unstructured, so that it is poured out to infinity. But Father and Son and Holy Spirit, by
B nature equal in honour, 'whose wealth is continuity of substance and the one outburst of radiance',[4] are constituted by the triad, neither flowing out beyond these [persons] of the Godhead, lest we introduce a community of gods, nor being bounded within these [persons], lest we be condemned for the poverty of Godhead. This is not an explanation of the cause of the source of beings that is itself beyond being, but a demonstration of the reverent glory that surrounds it, if the Godhead is monad, but not dyad, and triad, but not multitude, as being without beginning, bodiless and undisturbed. For the monad is truly monad. For it is not the beginning of everything that comes after it, according to the contraction of expansion, as if it were poured out naturally and led to multitude, but is the existent[5] reality of the consubstantial triad. And the triad is truly a triad, not completed by discrete numbers (for it is not a synthesis of monads, that might suffer division), but the
C substantial existence of the three-personed monad. For the triad is truly monad, because thus it is, and the monad truly triad because thus it subsists.[6] Thus there is one Godhead that is as monad, and subsists as triad. If, hearing of movement, you wonder how the Godhead that is beyond infinity is moved, understand that what happens is happening to us and not to the Godhead. For first we are illuminated with the reason for its being, then we are enlightened about the mode[7] in which it subsists, for we always understand that something is before we understand how it is. Therefore movement of the Godhead is constituted by the knowledge about the fact that it is and how it subsists that comes about through revelation that to those who receive it.

DIFFICULTY 5

INTRODUCTION

The fifth *Difficulty* of the later set is the only one in either set to discuss a passage from anyone else other than St Gregory of Nazianzus, 'the Theologian'. It differs from the others, too, in that it is not simply a discussion of the text cited, but of the whole (brief) letter of which the words cited are the beginning. The *Difficulty* has been analysed above at some length in chapter 4 of the Introduction.[1] There is little to add here, except to remind readers that it comes from the mid-630s, after Sophronius had raised his protest against the monenergism of the Alexandrian Pact of Union of 633, but long before Maximus had declared himself as a defender of Christological Orthodoxy against Monothelitism. Much of the point of the *Difficulty* is textual: to justify the Orthodox reading of 'a certain theandric energy' in the fourth letter of Denys the Areopagite against the longstanding Monophysite reading of 'one theandric energy', to which Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and other Monenergists and Monothelites made (and were to make) appeal.

TEXT

1045D In the letter from Saint Denys the Areopagite to Gaius the monk:

> How, you ask, is Jesus, who is beyond everything, ranked together with all human beings at the level of being? For here he is not called a man as the cause of humankind but as one who is himself in his whole being truly a man.[2]

Since, according to the simple interpretation of Holy Scripture, God as the cause of all is designated by the names
1048A of everything that he has produced, and again after the Incarnation is only in this mode[3] called man, the great Denys corrects the monk Gaius with these words, teaching that the God of all, as Incarnate, is not simply said to be man, but is himself truly a man in the whole of his being. The sole, true proof of this is its natural constitutive power, and one would not err from the truth in calling this a natural energy properly and primarily characteristic of it, being a form-enduing movement that contains every property that is naturally added to it, apart from which there is only non-being, since, according to this great teacher, only that which in no way is is
B without movement or existence.[4] Most clearly therefore he teaches that God Incarnate is to be denied nothing at all of what is ours, apart from sin (which does not belong to nature), and that he is expressly called not simply a man, but himself truly a man in all his being. He [Denys] contends in what follows[5] that to be called onewho exists humanly is properly his, saying, 'We do not confine our definition of Jesus to the human plane', since we do not decree that he is a mere man, severing the union that transcends thought. For we use the name *human being* of the One who is God by nature and who truly shared our being in an essential way, not simply because he is the cause of humankind. For he is not man only, because he is also God himself, 'nor beyond being only', because he is
C also himself a man, if there exists neither mere man nor bare God, 'but one who is in different ways truly man and the lover of man'. For out of his infinite longing for humankind he has himself become by nature that for which he longed, neither suffering anything in his own nature in his inexpressible selfemptying, nor changing anything of what is human through his ineffable assumption,[6] nor in any way diminishing nature, which the Word properly supports as constituting it. 'Beyond what is human', because divinely [conceived] without a man, 'in accordance with the human', because humanly [conceived] after the law of child-birth. 'The one beyond being assumed being from the being of humankind', for he did not appear to us simply in the mere form of flesh, in accordance with the silly tales of the Manichees,[7] nor did he come down
D from heaven to share being with the flesh, after the Apollinarian myths,[8] but he himself became truly a man in the whole of his being, by the assumption of flesh endowed with an

intelligent soul, and united himself to it [*sc.* human nature] hypostatically.

'The one who is eternally beyond being is not less overflowing with transcendent being': for having become man he is not subject to nature, rather on the contrary he raises up
1049A nature to himself, making it another mystery, for he himself remains completely incomprehensible, and shows his own Incarnation, which has been granted a generation beyond being, to be more incomprehensible than any mystery. The more he becomes comprehensible through it, so much the more through it is he known to be incomprehensible. 'For he is hidden after his revelation,' the teacher says, 'or, to speak more divinely, also in his revelation. And this mystery of Jesus in itself remains hidden, and can be drawn out by no reason, by no intellect, but when spoken of it remains ineffable, and when understood unknown.'[9] What could do more to demonstrate the proof of the divine transcendence of being than this: revelation shows that it is hidden, reason that it is unspeakable, and intellect that it is transcendently unknowable, and further, its assumption of being that it is
B beyond being? 'And certainly with an abundance of it [*sc.* transcendence of being] and truly coming into being it assumes being beyond being': clearly he 'institutes afresh'[10] the laws of his natural generation and specifically without male seed he truly became a human being. And the Virgin declares this when she conceives him in a way that transcends nature and the Word who is beyond being is humanly formed without a man from her virginal blood by a strange ordinance contrary to nature. 'And he performs human activities in a way beyond the human': dispassionately instituting afresh the nature of the elements by degrees. For clearly water is unstable, and cannot receive or support material and earthly feet, but by a power beyond nature it is constituted as unyielding. If then with unmoistened feet, which have bodily bulk and the weight of matter, he traversed the wet and
C unstable substance, walking on the sea as on a pavement, he shows through this crossing that the natural energy of his own flesh is inseparable from the power of his divinity.[11] For the movement that can make such a crossing is constituted by a nature belonging to no-one else than the Godhead, that is beyond infinity and being, united to it hypostatically. For the Word beyond being who once assumed being humanly possessed undiminished, as his own, the movement that characterizes him generically as a human being, naturally

specified in everything he performs as man. Since he has truly become man, he breathes, speaks, walks, moves his hands,
D uses his senses naturally in the perception of things sensible, is hungry, thirsty, eats, sleeps, is tired, weeps, is distressed, and possesses every other independent capacity and, in every other respect in the mode of a soul that with its own energy moves the body that forms one nature that has truly become and is called his own, or to speak properly, without change he has become whatever nature was needed to fulfil in reality the economy for our sake. Therefore he did not abrogate the
1052A constitutive energy of the assumed nature, nor does the teacher support such a notion when he says, 'he assumed being in a mode beyond being, and performed human activities in a way beyond the human', but he shows in both the newness of the modes *[tropoi]* preserved in the constancy of the natural *logoi,* without which no being is what it is. And if we say that the transcendent negation[12] entails the affirmation of the assumed nature but the destruction of this [*sc.* the human] constitutive energy, by what reason do we show that the same thing equally affirmed of both [natures], in respect of existence, entails destruction in respect of this [*sc.*, the human nature]? And again if the assumed nature is not self-moved, since it is moved by the Godhead that has been truly united to it hypostatically, and we do not take away its constitutive movement, neither may we confess the same nature to be
B manifest as an independent *hypostasis,* that is by itself, but as receiving being in the very God the Word that has in truth assumed its being.[13] And since with both [natures] we have the same reason for refusal, we confess together with the nature the movement, without which there is no nature, knowing that the *logos* of existence is one thing, and the mode in which it exists another, convinced that one is a matter of nature, the other a matter of the economy. The coming together of these [natures] makes the great mystery of the nature *[physiologia]* of Jesus who is beyond nature, and shows that in this the difference and the union of the energies are preserved, the one beheld without division in the natural *logos* of what has been united, and the other acknowledged without confusion in the monadic mode of what has come to pass.[14] For why, where or how could nature come to be bereft of its
C constitutive power? For this great teacher says that 'what completely lacks power neither is, nor is something, nor is there any kind of affirmation concerning it'.[15] It follows then that it is necessary reverently to confess the natures of Christ,

of which he is the *hypostasis,* and his natural energies, of
which he is the true union in respect of both of the natures,
since he acts by himself congruently, monadically, even as
with a single form, and in everything displays without
separation the energy of his own flesh together with the divine
power. How can the same be by nature God and again by
nature man without having unfailingly what belongs to both
by nature? How can it be known what and who he is, unless it
D is guaranteed by what the One who is unchangeable performs
naturally? How is it guaranteed in respect of one of the
natures, from which and in which and which he is,[16] that he
remains unmoved and inactive? Beyond being, therefore, he
has assumed being, having fashioned a beginning of
generation and another beginning of birth by nature, having
been conceived by the seed of his own flesh, having been born
and in his birth becoming the seal of virginity, and showing
that the contradiction of what cannot be mixed is true in his
case. For the same person is both virgin and mother,
instituting nature afresh by bringing together what is
1053A opposed, since virginity and giving birth are opposed, and
no-one would have thought that naturally they could be
combined. Therefore the virgin is truly the Mother of God,[17]
conceiving without seed in a way beyond nature, and giving
birth to the Word beyond being, since one who gave birth to
one engendered and conceived is properly mother.

B And he does human things in a way transcending the
human, showing, in accordance with the closest union, the
human energy united without change to the divine power,
since the [human] nature, united without confusion to [the
divine] nature, is completely interpenetrated, and in no way
annulled, nor separated from the Godhead hypostatically
united to it. For the Word beyond being truly assumed our
being for our sake and joined together the transcendent
negation with the affirmation of nature and what is natural to
it, and became man, having linked together the way of being
that is beyond nature with the *logos* of being of nature, that he
might confirm the [human] nature in its new modes of being
without there being any change in its *logos,* and make known
C the power that transcends infinity, recognized as such in the
coming to be of opposites. And by the authority of his intention[18]
he made what we suffer something positive, but not as if we
were the results of natural necessity, and again, working
within what we are capable of, he passes through what we
suffer by nature, and by the authority of his intention he

shows that what we can naturally move by our intention is moved by himself. This the teacher makes plain in what follows when he says, 'And who could go through all the rest? One who looks through them divinely in a way that transcends the intellect will know that the affirmations concerning Jesus' love for humankind have the power of transcendent negations.' For when the Word beyond being, in accordance with his ineffable conception, put on with the [human] nature everything that belongs to [human] nature, he possessed no human affirmation in accordance with natural reason, which was not also divine, negated in a mode beyond nature. The knowledge of these
D things exists beyond the intellect as indemonstrable, its only conviction being the faith of those who sincerely worship the mystery of Christ. And giving, as it were, the comprehensive meaning of this, he says, 'For, to speak briefly, he was not human', because he was free by nature of every natural necessity, since he did not owe his existence to the ordinance of generation that holds with us; 'nor was he non-human', because he was in the whole of his being truly human, not lacking by nature anything that is natural to us; 'but coming from humanity', since he was consubstantial with us, being human by nature as we are; 'transcending the human',
1056A circumscribing our nature by fresh ways of being, which are not ours; 'in a way beyond the human he truly became human', possessing unimpaired ways of being beyond nature and *logoi* of being in accordance with nature, he united them one with another. Their coming together would have been inconceivable, had not he, to whom nothing is inconceivable, become the true union, not acting through either of the natures of which he was the *hypostasis* separately from the other, but rather confirming each through the other. Since in truth he was both, he existed as God moving his own humanity, and as man revealing his own Godhead. Divinely, if I may so speak, he experienced suffering, for he suffered willingly, since he was not a mere man, and humanly he performed wonders, for he did them through the flesh, since he was not naked God. As his sufferings were wonderful, since
B they had become new through the natural divine power of the One who suffered, so were his wonders suffered, since they were fulfilled through the natural suffering power of the flesh of the One who worked these wonders. Knowing this, the teacher said, 'Furthermore, the divine things did not take place divinely', because they did not take place in a solely divine way, as if separated from the flesh, for he was not

simply beyond being; nor did he do 'human things humanly', because they did not take place in a solely fleshly way, as if separated from the Godhead, for he was not only a man; 'but as God made man he exercised a certain new "theandric"[19] energy amongst us'. For by the assumption of flesh endowed with an intellectual soul, he truly became man, he who was in a different way the lover of humankind, and as man he possessed the divine energy united to the fleshly in an ineffable union, and fulfilled the economy for our sake
C theandrically, accomplishing both divinely things, or to speak more plainly, exercising the divine and human energy in the same [person].

Therefore when the wise man makes affirmation of the union by negation of the division between the divine and human [properties], he does not ignore the natural difference between what has been united. For the union, in refusing division, does not harm the difference. If the mode of union
D preserves the *logos* of the difference, to draw out the meaning of the words of the saint, then since Christ has a double appellation corresponding to his nature, it is clear that he has a double energy, if the essential *logos* of what has been united in the union has not been diminished in any way in essence or in quality. But it is not as if, by the negation of the extremities brought together in the union, there is made an affirmation of something intermediate. For Christ is not some intermediate being, affirmed by the negation of the extremities. For there is a 'certain new' thing, characteristic of the new mystery, the
1057A *logos* of which is the ineffable mode of the coming together. For who knows how God assumes flesh and yet remains God, how, remaining true God, he is true man, showing himself truly both in his natural existence, and each through the other, and yet changing neither? Faith alone can grasp these things, honouring in silence the Word, to whose nature no *logos* from the realm of being corresponds. 'Theandric', then, not simply, nor as some composite thing, consisting simply neither of the naked Godhead by nature, nor of mere humanity, nor being a composite nature, a kind of borderland between two extremes, but most naturally existing as God made man, that is as perfectly Incarnate. Nor again is this 'new' to be thought of as 'single',[20] nor as a 'single capacity'; for this 'newness' is not a matter of quality or quantity, since the definition of every
B nature is constituted by the *logos* of its essential energy, which is not double, like the griffin[21] celebrated in myths. Given this, how could such a being, with one energy, and that a natural

energy, have accomplished by this the wonders and the suffering, which differ one from another by the *logos* of their nature, without experiencing deprivation through the atrophy of one part or other of its permanent condition? For no being held together by the definition and *logos* of its nature can perform what is opposed to one and the same energy. Therefore it is not permitted to say that there is simply one natural energy of Godhead and flesh in Christ, since Godhead and flesh are not the same in natural quality. It would be to say that there was one nature, and the triad would become a
C foursome. For neither by nature, nor by power, nor by energy, has the Godhead become the same, they say, as the flesh. For the Son is the same as the Father and the Spirit through their single nature, but it is not in virtue of that that he has become the same as the flesh through union, and made life-giving through union with him that which by nature is mortal. For he would be shown as existing in a changeable nature, if he changed the essence of flesh into what it is not, and made the union the same by nature. But let us think about the theandric energy as it has been explained. For he lives out this energy not for himself but for our sake and renews nature so that we can transcend nature. For his way of life is a life led subject to the law of nature. For since the Lord is double in nature, it is appropriate that he is manifest having a life corresponding both to divine and human laws, welded
D together without confusion to become the same. This life is also new, not simply as strange and astounding to those on earth, and so distinguished from the nature of the things that exist, but also characteristic of the new energy of the life newly lived. And perhaps the one who understood used the appellation 'theandric', as appropriate to this mystery, so that he might make plain the mode of exchange that accords with the ineffable union, that makes whatever naturally belongs to each part of Christ interchangeable with the other, without changing and distorting each part into the other at the level
1060A of the *logos* of nature. For it is just like the way the cutting-edge of a sword plunged in fire becomes burning hot and the heat acquires a cutting-edge (for just as the fire is united to the iron, so also is the burning heat of the fire to the cutting-edge of the iron, and the iron becomes burning hot by its union with the fire, and the fire acquires a cutting-edge by union with the iron). Neither suffers any change by the exchange with the other in union, but each remains unchanged in its own being as it acquires the property of its partner in union.

So also in the mystery of the divine Incarnation:[22] the Godhead and the humanity are united hypostatically, but neither of the natural energies is displaced by the union, nor
B are they unrelated to each other after the union, but they are distinguished in their conjuncture and embrace. For by the active power of his own Godhead, the Word made flesh, possessing the whole power of his humanity, with all its openness to suffering, quite unimpaired by the union, being humanly God, performs wonders, accomplished through the flesh that is passible by nature, and being divinely man, he undergoes the sufferings of nature, making them perfect by divine authority. Or rather in both he acts theandrically, being at the same time both God and man, sufferings showing that he is what we have become, and by performing wonders demonstrating to us what we are to become, and by both confirming the truth of those things from which and in which and which he is, as the only true and faithful One, who wishes
C to be confessed as such by us. Having this One who has taken form, O those made holy by word and life, let us imitate his long-suffering.

Take this present writing,[23] and show me that you are kind judges of what is contained in it, overcoming with sympathy the slips of your child, who presents this to you only as a work of obedience. Be mediators for me of the reconciliation with Him, creating *the peace that passes all understanding* (Phil. 4: 7). Of this peace the *prince*[24] is the Saviour himself who frees those who fear him from the trouble of the passions through the endurance of ascetic struggle, and the Father of the age to come, who begets in the Spirit through love and knowledge those who will fill the upper world. To him be glory, majesty and might, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to the ages.
D Amen.

OPUSCULE 7

INTRODUCTION

This short work is addressed—like several of Maximus' *opuscula* and a letter—to Marinus, at the time of this work a deacon in Cyprus.[1] Sherwood (1952, 51) dates it to 642, mainly because it is clearly written with knowledge of the *Ecthesis*. After an introduction praising Marinus' spiritual maturity, Maximus inveighs against the divisive tendencies of heresies, before he embarks on an attack on the Monenergist/Monothelite heresy. A major part of the argument is discussion of passages from the Fathers: Athanasius, two of the Cappadocian Fathers, and Cyril of Alexandria. Part of his discussion consists of interpretation of the Agony in the Garden, in which he draws on discussions of this event in a (possibly spurious) work by Athanasius and in Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on St John's Gospel. In addition he discusses a passage (no longer extant) from Gregory of Nyssa, a favourite passage from one of Gregory Nazianzen's *Theological Orations* and the celebrated passage about the 'theandric energy' of the Incarnate Word in Denys the Areopagite's fourth letter.

His argument turns, as we have already seen in earlier works, on the integrity of created natures, including the human nature that the Word assumed. Although towards the end Maximus does refer to two natural wills in Christ, in his arguments he mainly has in view the heretical assertion that there is only one energy.

TEXT

69B Dogmatic tome, sent to Marinus the Deacon in Cyprus: I do not know whether rather to be amazed at the modesty of your great reverence or astonished at the courage of your very great zeal, all-holy servant of God and all-wise initiate in and guide

to his mysteries. For by the sacred weaving together of both you possess perfection in everything good. In accordance with this, then, you are completely devoted in everything to God through the fulfilment of his divine commandments. Through the exceeding severity of your poverty you are considered to be wholly different from those who, like me, by the material inclination of their souls crawl in the slime of impure passions, and at the same time you are preserved steadfast from within by reason, for nothing is stronger than voluntary poverty for
C the stability and preservation of what is good and fine. For the foundation of the divine structures in the soul has been established as unbreakable, and an agent of salvation for all those others who are devoted to the good. For it is not so much by words of teaching, as by active example, that those who wisely direct their mind and their life towards you are led to the depth of virtue through sublime lowliness. In accordance with this zeal, I say, you have the whole warmth of the Spirit,[2] and possess fire in the earth of the heart,[3] that fire which the Word, who by nature loves the good and loves humankind, and exhausts all our wretched habits and movements, came to cast on the earth.[4] You burn up those who rave and run riot from
D deceit and madness in wicked deeds and fraudulent words,
72A convicting them of unsoundness and purpose-lessness, by the radiance of the blessed lamp that burns within you inextinguishably according to your divine knowledge and virtue. You warm those who seek refuge with this frozen product,[5] deprived of light, and far from the radiant beams of the divine words, driving away and dissolving the night, and exchanging their extreme pusillanimity for the greatest courage and power. And again *you illuminate from the eternal mountains* (Psa. 75:5) —I mean, from the immaterial mountains—with all knowledge that transcends the senses and the power of the words and dogmas of the Fathers, those who desire light and by the taste of wisdom are already formed through hope into the image of that which is the natural object of their longing, as you lead and introduce them reverently to
B that complete transformation through experience. For is not the work of your sacred priesthood thus represented?— as unbending zeal tempered by modesty before God, and the Word implanted in us that both sustains and inspires us, preparing us to accomplish whatever the One who is first by nature encourages, and wisely guiding us in our ascent to him and in the perfect recapitulation through holy deeds and good dogmas, and in fleeing and turning from those who make us fail

in the sacred ascent.

C And what else violently breaks us off from this and, as it were, blocks the way, I mean, of the path to the Word, but the fearful treason now produced by those who seek to pursue the *royal*[6] way of the divine dogmas of the Fathers, but neither know nor wish to know any way of preventing the misfortune of being carried into the gulfs of confusion or the chasms of
73A division:[7] something known by the leading and guiding of the grace of the all-holy Spirit to those who press on in prayer through a pure and orthodox faith to the perfect *face-to-face* (1 Cor. 13:12) knowledge of the *great God and Saviour* of all, *Christ* (Titus 2:13), and initiation into him. For it is treason to distort the reverent glory that is his and surrounds him, betraying him by the introduction of the confession and teaching of heterodoxy, so as to deprive him of the all-holy flesh that he took from us, or rather overthrow the whole economy. Above all, it is treason when the Word has lived in the flesh among us, and the heavier treason, the more perfectly the knowledge of his Godhead and the truth of his
B humanity has been revealed to all, and carried to *the ends of the world* (Rom. 10:18) by the mighty voice of the holy Fathers preaching it. For everywhere, and by all, under their guidance —for they were teachers, who were sound judges in divine matters—it has been confessed and believed in an orthodox manner that the onlybegotten Son, one of the holy and consubstantial Trinity,[8] being perfect God by nature, has become a perfect human being in accordance with his will, assuming in truth flesh, consubstantial with us and endowed with a rational soul and mind, from the holy Mother of God[9] and ever-Virgin, and united it properly and inseparably to himself in accordance with the *hypostasis,* being one with it right from the beginning. But the *hypostasis* was not composite, nor the nature simple. But remaining God and con
C substantial with the Father, when he *became flesh* (John 1: 14), he became double, so that double by nature, he had kinship by nature with both extremes, and preserved the natural difference of his own parts each from the other. His person being monadic, he had a perfect identity in each of his parts, and preserved the personal difference with the extremes, since he was one and sole. And by the complete lack of any natural or essential distortion at the extremes, each of them was perfect. He was the same at once God and man. Those who irreverently think that there is a natural diminishment in what has come together present him as

imperfect and as suffering the lack of what is naturally his. For unless the Incarnate Word guards without loss the properties of both natures (*without sin* [Heb. 4:15], according to the teaching of the divine Fathers), out of which and in
D which[10] he properly is, even after the union,[11] then he exists as a defective God. His Godhead is then altogether imperfect. And his humanity is also defective, since it is altogether diminished in what is natural to it.

It is not then necessary, on the pretext of a union that harms neither of the elements, but only binds them hypostatically into one, to destroy their existence by the denial
76A of the natural will and the essential energy. For either, as making a whole out of parts, we melt down the two essential wills and the same number of natural energies and recast them by composition as one will and one energy, as in the myths, and there is manifest something completely strange and foreign to communion with either the Father or with us, for he does not have by nature a composite will or energy, nor do we. For there is no composition of those things in the underlying subject, because existence is not at all beheld in the things themselves and outside the underlying substance. For it is grotesque and utterly abominable to admit that what is above and what is below, that are bound in natural kinship with both natures, should be divided and cut in two by being torn asunder— these natures that are bound together in the inseparable hypostatic union. Or again we preserve
B unblemished the natural will of the divine nature of the Incarnate Word, and the energy that essentially goes with it, and remove and reject them from the nature of its humanity. And thus we damage the union that is beyond nature, which no longer has anything to bind it to the one *hypostasis,* and the flesh endowed with a rational soul and mind, that is of our nature and substance, is not at all preserved sound and whole in the Word. For what kind of a nature is that which has suffered loss of what belongs to it by nature?

C If then the Lord lacks these, or some of these, natural properties that belong to the flesh, then the flesh and humanity do not wholly exist. For how can those who say these things show that he is truly a human being by nature without these properties, or wholly human. Since he is no such thing, it is clear that the Word made flesh has not, become a human being, for he is deprived by nature of these, or some of these, properties. How then and by what reason can there be a nature that lacks such things? For what there is is something

quite other than our nature and completely foreign to it, indeed, utterly unknown: it existed with him from the beginning, and descending from above it came down with him, which is clearly what they think happened.[12] But why then did the descent to us take place? For we do not come close to him through his assumption of the holy flesh and hypostatic union with it, if it is not taken from us. The whole thing is an unreal
D delusion, a mere form deceiving the senses, and not the substance of flesh, nor the first-fruits of our race, unifying by grace the whole lump,[13] and dissolving all the divisions introduced by the transgression of the old Adam, through which nature has been condemned to death.

Why do they begrudge us a perfect salvation and a perfect confession? Why do they direct against us syllogisms from which there is no escape, and assert that wills follow from energies, and that with this there follows contradiction, from which they introduce wills that conflict. Why should I omit to
77A refute these charges? From where, and how, do they get these arguments? Why do they want to learn and enquire about only one thing, as if this were the only thing that mattered, and bring in the new *Ecthesis,*[14] imposing it involuntarily, and introducing force? Then, if they introduce the will after the action, since there was certainly no will before, where does it come from? And who is forced to have the will of the one who performed the action, so that what is done is done against his will, and acquiesced in contrary to his purpose? How again, if the Word made flesh does not himself will naturally as a human being and perform things in accordance with nature, how can he willingly undergo hunger and thirst, labour and weariness, sleep and all the rest? For the Word does not
B simply will and perform these things in accordance with the infinite nature beyond being that he has together with the Father and the Son, for as the divine teacher of Nyssa, the great Gregory, says, 'with divine authority, he gives the nature time, when it wishes, to perform what belongs to itself.'[15] For if it is only as God that he wills these things, and not as himself being a human being, then either the body has become divine by nature, or the Word has changed its nature and become flesh by loss of its own Godhead, or the flesh is not at all in itself endowed with a rational soul, but is in itself completely lifeless and irrational.

If, then, [his humanity] has a rational soul, then it possesses the natural will. For everything that is rational by nature, certainly also possesses a will by nature. If then, as man, he

has a natural will, he certainly wills in reality those things
that, as God by nature, he has fashioned and introduced
C naturally into the constitution of [God Incarnate]. For he did
not come to debase the nature which he himself, as God and
Word, had made, but he came that that nature might be
thoroughly deified which, with the good pleasure of the Father
and and the co-operation of the Spirit, he willed to unite to
himself in one and the same *hypostasis,* with everything that
naturally belongs to it, apart from sin. Therefore, as God by
nature, he willed what is divine by nature and belongs to the
80A Father. For he was one who willed together with his own
begetter. And again the same, as man, he willed those things
that are naturally human. He kept the economy pure of every
delusion, not at all resisting the will of the Father. For nothing
that is natural, and certainly no nature itself, would ever
resist the cause of nature, nor would the intention *[gnômê],* or
anything that belongs to the intention, if it agreed with the
logos of nature. For if anyone said that something natural had
resisted God, this would be rather a charge against God than
against nature, for introducing war naturally to the realm of
being and raising up insurrection against himself and strife
among all that exists. That nothing natural is opposed to God
is clear from the fact that these things were originally
fashioned by him, and there can be no complaint on our side
B about their natural constitution. Quite the contrary, they
clearly suffer accusations because of their being perverted. For
in accordance with this perversion, we have become inclined to
every evil because of the primordially wicked serpent but, in
accordance with our constitution, we exist naturally as
moulded by God and as honoured creatures. Therefore,
according to the divine Fathers, we make no diminution at all
in the natural wills, or energies, just as we make no
diminution in the natures themselves, in the case of one and
the same God the Word Incarnate. We hold the orthodox faith
that the same is perfect God and perfect man in every respect
from the fact that he possesses — and wills and performs—
perfectly and naturally both what is divine and what is human,
and has properly both divine and human being and will and
C energy, lest we should maintain, contrary to the truth, that
because of a lack in any of his natural properties there be a
diminution of either of the natures, out of which and in which
he exists, and not rather their perfect existence.

For that he has by nature a human will, just as he has an
essentially divine will, the Word himself shows clearly, when,

in the course of the economy that took place for our sake, he humanly begged to be spared from death, saying, *Father, if it be possible, let the cup pass from me* (Matt. 26:39), in order to manifest the weakness of his own flesh. So his flesh was acknowledged by those who saw him not to be a phantom deceiving the senses, but he was in truth and properly a
D human being: to this his natural will bears witness in his plea to be spared from death that took place in accordance with the economy. And again, that the human will is wholly deified, in its agreement with the divine will itself, since it is eternally moved and shaped by it and in accordance with it, is clear when he shows that all that matters is a perfect verification of the will of the Father, in his saying as a human being, *Not mine, but your will be done,*[16] by this giving himself as a type and example of setting aside our own will by the perfect fulfilment of the divine, even if because of this we find ourselves face to face with death. For unless he became a human being by nature, and possessed a natural human will,
81A and submitted this in accordance with the economy and constrained it to union with the Father's will, and said to the Father himself, *Not my will be done, but yours,* then clearly he said this as God by nature, and this would show that he did not possess a will, identical with and equal to that of the Father, but another one, different by nature. And when he submits, he is asking to become only the Father's. But if he possessed another will different from the natural will of the Father, it is clear that he has an altered essence. 'For if there is one essence, there is also one will', according to the most wise Cyril.[17] If there is a difference of the natural will, then necessarily there is a complete difference of nature. There are
B then two. For either as man he had a natural will, and, for our sake in the economy, he willed to entreat that he be spared from death, and again, because of his perfect agreement with the will of the Father, he turned against it; or alternatively as man he does not have a natural will, and as God by nature he endures the sufferings of the body in his own being, which is naturally reduced to death, and possesses a natural will different by essence from that of the Father. And he sought and entreated in prayer that that will might not be. But what kind of a God is this who is naturally afraid of the death of the flesh, and because of this begs the cup to be taken away, and possesses a natural will other than that of the Father? Let us therefore get rid of this absurdity from our souls, and embrace

the reverent confession of the Fathers. 'And when he says,
C *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass*,' as the great Athanasius says in his treatise on the Incarnation and the Trinity,[18] '*nevertheless not my will be done, but yours. For the spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak,*'[19] we understand 'that two wills are manifest here: the human, which belongs to the flesh, and the divine. For the human will, because of the weakness of the flesh, seeks to avoid the passion; the divine will is *eager*.'

And this the great theologian, Gregory, clearly teaches in his second sermon on the Son, when he says, 'For the willing of that one[20] is not opposed [to God],[21] but completely deified.'[22] Thus he possesses a human will, according to this divine teacher, only it was not opposed to God.[23] But this will is not
D at all deliberative,[24] but properly natural, eternally formed and moved by its essential Godhead to the fulfilment of the economy. And it is wholly and thoroughly deified by its agreement and concord with the Father's will, and can properly be said to have truly become divine in virtue of the union, but not by nature. For nothing at all changes its nature by being deified. When therefore he says 'completely deified', the teacher presents the union of Christ's human will with the
84A divine will of the Father, and he completely excludes any contrariety from the mystery of Christ, as if there were two beings willing opposing actions. And when he says 'For the willing of that one', he points to the innate movement of Christ's human will and its essential and natural difference from the divine will of the Father, and completely excludes confusion together with any phantom.

Understanding the meaning of the economy, this divine Father and together with him the holy teachers of the Catholic Church, fought against this confusion and the equally irreverent division, and loudly proclaimed the dogma of the difference and the union in respect of both of them [the wills], preserving the difference perfectly and in its effects in respect of the natural *logos,* and again saving the union, in the
B manner of the economy, firmly and hypostatically, so as to confirm the matters (and everything that naturally goes with them) that essentially exist in the one and sole Christ God in accordance with the inseparable union. For just as they all maintained the dogma that in one and the same there is one nature and another nature, the divine and the human, and therefore a double nature, so they loudly preached to all that there is also one will and another will, the divine and the

human, and therefore two wills, and one energy and another energy, the divine and the human, and again a double energy, that is two of them. So also they clearly pronounced the signification of the natures in number. For it appears that the same as man, who is also God by nature, wills in accordance with the economy that the cup pass, and in this he typifies
C what is human, as the wise Cyril taught us, so that he might take away all shrinking from death from our nature, and steel and arouse it to a brave assault against it, I mean against death. And again it appears that as God, being also a human being in essence, he wills to fulfil the economy of the Father and work the salvation of us all. It made clear then that as man, being by nature God, he acts humanly, willingly accepting the experience of suffering for our sake. And it is again made clear that as God, who is human by nature, he acts divinely and naturally exhibits the evidence of his divinity. From which the same one is recognized as being at the same time God and man by the natures, out of which and in which he exists, possessing naturally the same number of wills and the same
D number of energies, for the confirmation of the perfect existence of those [natures with their natural properties] that he properly is.

And if anyone, wanting to refute what has just been said, takes for a pretext the *theandric* energy of Denys, the revealer of God, or the [energy] that the most wise Cyril shows in the middle of the treatise to share kinship with both, let him know that he will draw no strength from these against the reverent confession.

For by the word 'theandric' the teacher obviously refers
85A periphrastically to the double energy of the double nature. For he is clearly putting together in this word the adjectives 'divine' and 'human', but not simply, for which reason he does not designate this energy with a number.[25] When he wants to designate monadically the union of the natural energies, he says 'this energy', which does not harm the natural difference between them, just as it is not by identity of essence that they form an inseparable union. But they say, 'if he has one energy, the same is also theandric'. But what if the Word Incarnate possessed one natural nature, and no-one objects? How is the one natural energy to be divided into two? And by what reason does the one energy in itself define and sustain the different essences, since it makes each nature essentially indistinguishable from others of the same kind and again
B makes it essentially different from others of another kind? And

I forbear from saying that it is excluded from any natural kinship with either the Father or us, since it is neither completely [the Father's] nor do we possess the natural and essential *theandric* energy. If it is said to be hypostatic, then this is a new idea: for who has ever spoken of possessing an hypostatic energy? Thus such an idea makes him foreign to the Father in his energy, if he has an hypostatic energy, and not a natural energy, other than that of the Father. For in his hypostatic characteristics, the Word is clearly different from him.

C And 'the energy shown to have kinship with both', according to the celebrated Cyril,[26] is not affirmed by the teacher to destroy the essential difference of the natural energies, out of which and in which the one and only Christ God exists, but to maintain their exact union. And see how with different words he imitates Denys, the revealer of God. For so that it does not seem that this one is naked God, or again a mere human being —neither God acting in his own nature without the body, nor a human being doing in his own nature whatever he thinks, but God enfleshed and for our sake perfectly Incarnate, the same acting 'at once divinely and humanly'—he said that 'it was not only by a word, and by commands appropriate to the divine,
D that the Saviour is found active in arousing the dead' and healing every disease and ailment. But 'he makes haste to associate with himself the holy flesh as a coworker, especially in this matter, [doing this as] God with his almighty command, giving life also by the touch of his holy flesh', hypostatically united to himself, that he might show that it is this flesh, to which properly belongs touch, voice and the rest, that has the ability to give life through its essential energy. Then, as he showed that the natural energies of Christ the God, who is composed of both, are perfectly preserved, that of his Godhead through the almighty command, and that of his
88A humanity through the touch, he proves them to be thoroughly united by their mutual coming together and interpenetration, showing that the energy is one through the union of the Word himself to his holy flesh, and not naturally or hypostatically. For the teacher did not say any such thing. But kinship exists through the parts, through them, as he said, in accordance with his almighty command and the touch of his hand.

It has been demonstrated, then from the sacred teaching itself of the wise man,[27] that he declares the difference between the natural energies, as of the natures themselves to which they belong, to be protected even after the union, and

also he has defined the union itself: the one in his speaking of 'almighty command and touch', the other in his speaking of
B 'the one having kinship'. Through these, he has splendidly driven away every reduction and division from the mystery of Christ. Those who will not accept this, and think of one energy having kinship with both the Word and the flesh, are affirming a Eutychian or Apollinarian confusion of essences. It is necessary in everything to keep the *logos* undamaged and the mode of the economy inviolate, lest there be introduced contrary to the truth the wicked coupling, I mean division and confusion.

We are to accept the reverent meaning of dogma drawn from the expressions of the holy Fathers—and any other expressions we may find—that indicate unity as in no way
C contradictory of other statements of the holy Fathers that indicate duality. We know that the latter are mighty for the difference and against confusion, and the former are steadfast for the union and against division, but both, the former and the latter, we welcome exceeding gladly with soul and voice, as we confess the orthodox faith. And we wisely turn away those expressions that seem somehow contrary, the meanings of which are equally opposed to themselves and to one another and to the truth, and we boldly expel them from our home, that is from the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God. And lest any of them contrive to bypass the orthodox faith by
D thievishly altering the boundaries set down by the Fathers,[28] we beseech that they be shot down with the weapons and dogmas of reverent faith and visited with disaster and destruction.

But it is necessary to know that in the case of natures and natural energies we have found expressions in these Fathers that signify unity rather than duality, such expressions as 'one Incarnate nature of God the Word',[29] 'the theandric energy',[30] 'shown to have kinship with both'.[31] But in the case of natural wills, I do not know of any expressions that express unity, but
89A only ones that designate different names and dual number. How then and for what reason should it ever be necessary to ask whether there is one will or two wills in Christ the God, however thoroughly we examine the question, since encouraged by the teaching and legislation of the Fathers we confess and maintain two natural wills in the same person, just as the natures themselves with their natural energies, since we know the difference between them?

Since I have now spoken of these things at length to your divinely-honoured sanctity, I beseech pardon, and correction, if I have said anything inappropriate or thought something incorrectly, from your benevolent affection that flows from the compassion of the Father. And I commend myself to Christ God, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is
B glorified to the ages of ages. Amen.

OPUSCULE 3

INTRODUCTION

This short work, also addressed to Marinus, now described as a priest, is the last of three *opuscula* sent to him in 645 or 646. It is therefore one of the last works of Maximus to have survived, for we have little after his departure to Rome in 646. The three *opuscula* (1–3) belong together, the first is mainly concerned with defining the terms used in the Christological controversy, and the second and third are extracts from a much longer treatise (which no longer survives). The third, translated here, is about the distinction between natural and 'gnomic' wills: a distinction important for Orthodox Christology, which must hold, according to Maximus, that there are two natural wills in Christ, but not that there are two 'gnomic' wills, for that would lead to a picture of Christ as schizophrenic. It is a difficult distinction, which I have attempted to elucidate in chapter 4 of the Introduction. Much of Maximus' argument in this work proceeds by way of reducing the position of Severus (the sixth-century Patriarch of Antioch who is usually the nominal opponent in Maximus' arguments) to absurdity, but in the course of his arguments, the nature of the distinction between a natural and a deliberative (or 'gnomic') will becomes clear, and with it a credible picture of what is meant by affirming two natural wills in Christ. Here, as always, an important premise is his conviction of the integrity of natures: Redemption, which means restoration, cannot entail distortion of any nature, certainly not the human nature that the Word of God assumed in the Incarnation.

TEXT

45B From the same work, chapter 51, that when the Fathers say that there are two natural wills in Christ, they mean that there are two natural laws, not two inclinations *[gnômai]*.[1]

C Let no-one censure the doctrine that forbids a duality of gnomic wills, when they find that nearly all the glorious teachers say that there are two wills. Nor let him transfer his reverent mind to the other position, and say with Severus that there is one will, lest he let one evil follow another, I mean confusion follow division.[2] For the divine Fathers do not speak of quantity in relation to gnomic wills, but only in relation to natural wills, rightly calling the essential and natural laws and principles of what has been united wills. For they think that it is the natural appetency of the flesh endowed with a rational soul, and not the longing of the mind of a particular man moved by an opinion, that possesses the natural power of the desire for being, and is naturally moved and shaped by the Word towards the fulfilment of the economy. And this they
D wisely call the will, without which the human nature cannot be. For the natural will is 'the power that longs for what is natural'[3] and contains all the properties that are essentially
48A attached to the nature. In accordance with this to be disposed by nature to will is always rooted in the willing nature. For to be disposed by nature to will and to will are not the same thing, as it is not the same thing to be disposed by nature to speak and to speak. For the capacity for speaking is always naturally there, but one does not always speak, since what belongs to the essence is contained in the principle of the nature, while what belongs to the wish is shaped by the intention *[gnômê]* of the one who speaks. So being able to speak always belongs to the nature, but how you speak belongs to the *hypostasis.* So it is with being disposed by nature to will and willing. If then to be disposed by nature to will and to will are not the same (for the one, I said, belongs to the essence, while the other exists at the wish of the one who wills), then the Incarnate Word possesses as a human being the natural disposition to will, and this is moved and shaped by his divine will. 'For the will of that one', the great Gregory
B says, 'is not opposed to God but is completely deified.'[4] If it is deified, it is clearly deified by its coming together with the One who deifies. What deifies and what is deified are certainly two, and not one and the same by nature. What deifies and what is deified are then related, and if they are related, they are certainly brought together, the one to the other, naturally, and each is thought of together with the other.

Therefore, in his natural capacity, the Saviour is distinguished as a human being, willing in a fleshly way the shrinking in the face of death together with the rest of the

passions, showing the economy to be pure of any fantasy, and redeeming the nature from the passions to which it has been condemned as a result of sin. And again he shows his eager desire, putting death to death in the flesh, in order that he might show as a human being that what is natural is saved in
C himself, and that he might demonstrate, as God, the Father's *great* and ineffable *purpose*,[5] fulfilled in the body. For it was not primarily in order to suffer, but in order to save, that he became a human being. Therefore he said, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not mine, but your will be done;*[6] showing, in the shrinking, the determination of the human will shaped and brought to be (in harmony with the divine will) in accordance with the interweaving of the natural *logos* with the mode of the economy. For the Incarnation is an effective demonstration of both nature and the economy, I mean of the natural *logos* of what has been united, confirming the mode of the hypostatic union, and 'instituting afresh the natures',[7] without any
D change or confusion. But the will did not need to be rendered idle or made active in accordance with the same will: that would be absurd, since the Son's will is by nature the same as the Father's. The Saviour therefore possesses as a human being a natural will, which is shaped, but not opposed, by his divine will. For nothing that is natural can be opposed to God in any way, not even in inclination, for a personal division would
49A appear, if it were natural, and the Creator would be to blame, for having made something that was at odds with itself by nature.

How did the Word Incarnate truly become a human being, if it lacked that which best characterizes a nature as rational? For what is deprived of the movement of longing that follows desire has no share in any power of life. And that which does
B not possess any power of life out of its nature is clearly not a soul of any kind, without which the flesh is not what it is. Therefore the economy would be a mere fantasy, if he merely had the shape of flesh. But if, as Severus said, he did not have, as man, a natural will, the Word Incarnate would not fulfil the hypostatic union with flesh, endowed by nature with a rational soul and intellect. For if he was truly, as man, lacking a natural will, he would not truly have become perfect man. And if he did not truly become perfect man, he did not become man at all. For what kind of existence does an imperfect nature have, since the principle of its existence no longer exists?

The purport therefore of Severus, and his followers, is by a
C certain natural diminishment to expel the assumed nature in the ineffable union, and to cover themselves with the defilement of Mani's fantasy,[8] Apollinaris' confusion,[9] and Eutyches' fusion.[10] I remember, when I was staying on the island of Crete,[11] that I heard from certain false bishops of the Severan party, who disputed with me, that 'we do not say, in accordance with the *Tome of Leo,* that there are two energies in Christ, because it would follow that there were two wills, and that would necessarily introduce a duality of persons, nor again do we say one energy, which might be regarded as simple, but we say, in accordance with Severus, that one will, and every divine and human energy proceeds from one and
52A the same God the Word Incarnate.' Against them one might angrily apply that part of the prophecy: *O, O, flee from the north; in Zion you are saved, you who inhabit the daughter of Babylon.*[12] *From the north:* that is truly the understanding of Severus,[13] a place become gloomy, and deprived of the continuance of the divine light. *Daughter of Babylon:* the confused teaching of false dogmas, wickedly brought forth from the most wicked habit picked up from him, which those *inhabit* who have turned away from the light of knowledge, and do not wish to be saved through conversion to *Zion,* I mean the Church.

For the doctrine of Severus, when examined, is opposed both to theology and to the economy.[14]

For if, according to him, the wills naturally follow the energies, and persons are naturally introduced by the wills, as
B effect follows cause (but what kind of an argument is this!), then clearly according to him there is a will for every person, and with this certainly a suitable energy is introduced. For from the principle of preserving relationships intact, it follows that there is equal reciprocity between those that are related. Since therefore what is called simply has many meanings, if the wills that are introduced by reciprocity between the persons are natural, then, according to Severus, the blessed monad will also be a triad of natures, but if they are gnomic, they will certainly disagree with each other and there will be
C no coming together of wills, as in a triad of persons, and certainly, if there is one will of the triad beyond being, there will be a Godhead with three names and a single person.[15] And again, if on Severus' premiss will follows energy, by this the person will be introduced, and necessarily the energy will be destroyed, and the will that follows it will be destroyed, too, as

well as the person that had been introduced. If then the will is destroyed together with the energy, and the person together with the will, then according to Severus Christ will be non-
D existent, since, through the will destroyed together with the energy, the person introduced with the will will have been destroyed too. And again, if wills necessarily follow energies, and persons are introduced together with the wills, and they say that every divine and human energy proceeds from the
53A same God the Word Incarnate, then every will (clearly divine and human) will also proceed from one and the same Word Incarnate, following the energies and together with them introducing the same number of persons. And no reason will gainsay it. Therefore, according to Severus, Christ will be without being through the destruction of his natural energies, and again through the impugning of one [energy], deprived of will and hypostasis, and, with every advance of the divine and human energy, be many-willed and many-personed, or to speak more exactly, have an infinity of wills and persons. For
B to say 'every energy' is to signify an innumerable quantity.

Therefore there follows from the Severan premiss the collapse of theology, and there is introduced Arian polytheism,[16] Sabellian atheism,[17] and a pagan kind of Godhead that fights against itself. According to the premiss itself, the doctrine of the economy is clearly corrupted: the one Christ is without being, will or hypostasis, and again the same has an infinity of wills and persons. What could be more ungodly than this? Do you see where the rule of Severus leads those who are convinced by it? For such is every doctrine that
C does not have truth as its unconquerable foundation.

If, my dear friend, you say that Christ has one will, how do you say this and what kind of thing are you saying? If this will of Christ's is natural, then you have alienated him by nature from both his Father and his Mother, for he is united to neither of them by nature. For Christ is neither of them by nature. And how, if you say this, are you going to escape the danger of polytheism? If, however, this will is *gnomic,* then it will be characteristic of his single hypostasis. For the *gnomic* is defined by the person, and, according to you, it will be shown to have another will from the Father and the Spirit, and to fight against them. If, furthermore, this will belongs to his sole Godhead, then the Godhead will be subject to passions and, contrary to nature, long for food and drink. If, finally, this will belongs to his sole human nature, then it will not be
D efficacious by nature. For how can it be, if it is human? And

the manifestation of wonders will clearly be shown to be something monstrous. Perhaps it is common by nature to
56A them both: but how can the will be common by nature to natures that are different? Perhaps it is a composite whole (to introduce a new myth and a new substance)? But what is a composite will? Again you have alienated him from the Father, characterizing by a composite will a sole composite hypostasis. Thus will the Word, when it comes, uproot *every plant that the Father has not planted*,[18] since he is not disposed to acquire a strange field.

But it appears that Severus destroys the natural will of Christ's humanity, not seeing that this movement of desire is constituted as the most proper and primary property of every rational nature. The Fathers seeing this, openly confessed the
B difference between two natural, but not *gnomic,* wills in Christ. They did not however say that there was any difference of *gnomic* wills in Christ, lest they proclaim him double-minded and double-willed, and fighting against himself, so to speak, in the discord of his thoughts, and therefore double-personed. For they knew that it was only this difference of *gnomic* wills that introduced into our lives sin and our separation from God. For evil consists in nothing else than this difference of our *gnomic* will from the divine will, which occurs by the introduction of an opposing quantity, thus making them numerically different, and shows the opposition of our *gnomic*
C will to God.

Nestorius and Severus, therefore, have one aim in their ungodliness, even if the mode is different. For the one, afraid of confusion, flees from the hypostatic union and makes the essential difference a personal division. The other, afraid of division, denies the essential difference and turns the hypostatic union into a natural confusion. It is necessary to confess neither confusion in Christ, nor division, but the union of those that are essentially different, and the difference of those that are hypostatically united, in order that the principle of the essences and the mode of the union might be reverently proclaimed. But they break asunder both of these: Nestorius
D only confirms a union of gnomic qualities, Severus only confirms the difference of natural qualities after the union,[19] and both of them have missed the truth of things. The one recklessly ascribes division to the mystery, the other confusion.

NOTES

1
LIFE AND TIMES

1 For Maximus' life, see principally Sherwood (1952), 1–22.
2 In the account of his trial in 655, Maximus states that he was then 75 years old: *PG* 90:128C.
3 Printed in the Migne edition of Maximus: *PG* 90.68–109.
4 Maximus himself confesses, in his prologue to the *Mystagogia* that he was privately educated and was not initiated into *logoi technikoi* (660B), which Berthold plausibly translates 'art of discourse' (Berthold [1985], 183). But this is a *topos,* so perhaps is not to be taken seriously. Maximus' style has, however, little of the graces of rhetoric, while being formidably learned at times.
5 Lackner (1967), 294f.
6 Lackner (1971). There is, as Lackner indicates, direct evidence from Maximus' own works that he had once been in the service of the 'Emperor here below' (*Ep.* 12:91.505B).
7 And finds support from Maximus' own words in *Ep.* 12 (505B).
8 In the account of his trial in 655, Maximus states that Anastasius had then been his disciple for thirty-seven years (*PG* 90:128C).
9 Brock (1973).
10 There is an echo of this tradition in the Syriac chronicle of Michael the Syrian and another anonymous Syriac chronicle, which note that Maximus was of Palestinian origin, from 'Iasphin': quoted in Guillaumont (1962), 179, and noted by Lackner (1967), 291.
11 I do not, however, think it at all plausible simply to take the evidence of the Syriac life for Maximus' childhood, and then add on the Greek evidence for the period from his time at the court of Heraclius, as Kazhdan seems to do (Kazhdan [1991], 2, 1323f., s.v. 'Maximos the Confessor'): it is simply incredible that a Palestinian monk could have become *protoasecretis*. Dalmais (1982) presents a more plausible case, arguing that Maximus' connections with the court were forged when he was a monk in Chrysopolis, an *émigré* from Palestine, then overrun by

the Persians. But there still seems unimpeachable evidence that Maximus had been in the imperial service: see above, n. 6.

12 For St Cyril and the Christological controversy that culminated at the Council of Ephesus, see most recently McGuckin (1994).
13 For the aftermath of Chalcedon, see Grillmeier (1987).
14 For a translation of the *Henotikon,* with textual variants and notes, see Coleman-Norton (1966), item 527 (3, 924–33).
15 For the affair of the Scythian monks, see Chadwick (1981), 185–8.
16 For the theological developments recounted in this paragraph, see, most recently, Grillmeier (1989).
17 Tanner (1990), I, 118.
18 See Meyendorff (1989), 270f.
19 For the rest of this chapter, see especially Meyendorff (1989), 333–80, and Murphy and Sherwood (1974), 133–260 (with translated documents: 303–22).
20 Theophanes, *Chronicle* (ed. C.de Boor, Leipzig, 1883–5), 330.
21 As Lackner notes: Lackner (1967), p. 287.

2
THE SOURCES OF MAXIMUS' THEOLOGY

1 Balthasar (1961), 5. The quotation is from the 1816 preface to Coleridge's poem 'Christabel' (*The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. E.H. Coleridge, Oxford, 1917, 214f.). I would like to acknowledge the help of my colleague at Goldsmiths', Professor Chris Baldick, in tracking down this quotation.
2 Lemerle (1977), 251.
3 For further discussion of the genre of the century, see Balthasar (1961), 482–9. The genre was revived in seventeenth-century England in Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditation.*
4 There is a good discussion of this question of the genre of Maximus' works, specifically in relation to *QT,* in Blowers (1991), 28–94.
5 On this see the first chapter of Pelikan (1974), 8–36, and also Louth (1993a).
6 On this understanding of the authority of councils, see most recently McGuckin (1994), 70f.
7 And remained so. Helen Waddell remarked long ago how she came to the Desert Fathers originally 'in a plan I had of reading for myself, with a mind emptied, what the ordinary medieval student would have read, to find the kind of furniture his imagination lived among': Waddell (1936), viii.
8 There is an English translation of the main Greek alphabetical collection: Ward (1975).
9 See the fundamental article: Viller (1930).
10 On this stage of the Origenist controversy: see Clark (1992).
11 For this later phase of Origenism, see Diekamp (1899), Sherwood (1955a), 72–92 and Guillaumont (1962).

12 For the text of the edict see Schwartz (1940), 189–214; the nine anathemas appended to the edict can also be found in Denzinger and Schönmetzer (1976), 403–11.
13 Anathema 11 of Constantinople II: Tanner (1990), 119.
14 Sherwood (1952), 3; see his full analysis of *Amb.* 7 in Sherwood (1955a), 72–222.
15 On Messalianism and the Macarian Homilies, see Stewart (1991).
16 See the footnote, *ad loc.* Other allusions to the Macarian Homilies can be found by consulting the *index fontium* in the editions of Maximus' works in *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca.* See the Bibliography.
17 See, e.g., *Amb.* 20 (1236D–1241D) and *Myst.* 5 (672D–684A).
18 See, e.g., *Amb.* 19:1236C, *Myst.* prologue: 660B.
19 On Maximus' understanding of religious experience, see Miquel (1966).
20 See des Places (1966), 9–10, citing Marrou (1943).
21 The quotation is from *Century on Spiritual Knowledge* 5 (des Places [1966], 86) and concerns the meaning of *thelesis: Opusc.* 26:277C; *Dialogue with Pyrrhus* [*Opusc.* 28], 28:301 C.
22 See des Places (1966), 66–7, and also his article in Heinzer and Schönborn (1982), 29–35.
23 See Louth (1981), 125–31.
24 On Cappadocian thought see Otis (1958), and also, more recently but hardly as succinctly, Pelikan (1993). On the influence of the Cappadocians on Maximus, see G.C.Berthold in Heinzer and Schönborn (1982), 51–9.
25 For a brief attempt to tackle this question see Louth (1993a).
26 See below, chapter 5 of the Introduction, and *Amb.* 41.
27 For more detail on Denys the Areopagite, see Louth (1989) and Rorem (1993).
28 See Suchla (1990), 1–91.
29 See Siddals (1983) and (1987).
30 See Louth (1986).
31 Translation from Luibheid (1987), 153f.
32 See the important paper: Gould (1989).
33 There has been considerable scholarly dispute about Maximus' debt to the Areopagite; for further detail, see Louth (1993b).
34 See *Amb.* 71, below, and Andia (forthcoming).

3
MAXIMUS' SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

1 *LP l.* 97–106 (*CCSG* 23, pp. 32f.).
2 Psa. 44.3, quoted by Maximus in *CT* I.97 and *Amb.* 10.17:1128A, in reference to the transfigured Christ.
3 Bousset (1923), 304, cited by Sherwood (1955b), 235, n. 356.
4 For an introduction to Evagrius, see Louth (1981), 100–13; and for more on his influence among the Greek and the Syrians, see Guillaumont

(1962). For Maximus' attempt to correct Evagrian metaphysics, see below, chapter 5 of the Introduction.

5 See Jerome, *Ep.* 133.3 (ed. J.Labourt, VIII, [Paris, 1963], 53).

6 To use the usual English equivalents, which are not always quite appropriate: the Greek terms are *gastrimargia, porneia, philarguria, lypê, orgê, akêdia, kenodoxia, hyperêphania.*

7 Evagrius, *Logos Praktikos* 81 (Guillaumont *et al.* [1971], 670).

8 Idem, ibid. 64 (Guillaumont et al. [1971], 648).

9 Evagrius, *On Prayer* 53 (cf. Palmer [1979], 62).

10 See Garrigues (1976), esp. 176–99; and Heinzer (1980), 181–98.

11 On the vexed question of Greek and Latin words for love, Oliver O'Donovan's comment is pertinent: 'It may be convenient for modern thinkers to label certain motifs by the Latin or Greek words which they think incapsulate them, but they should not then suppose they have discovered a lexicographical statute to which ancient writers can be held' (O'Donovan [1980], 10–11). On the language of love in Plato and the Fathers, see most recently Osborne (1994).

12 *CC* II.8, and cf. his doctrine in *Ep.* 2 (397BCD).

13 Cf. also *CC* I.55, II.14, III.56, IV.21.60f.

14 Cf. *Ep.* 2:405A.

15 See, for instance, *CC* II.16 (definition of passion) and II.17 (definition of vice).

16 Diadochus of Photikê, *Century on Spiritual Knowledge* 17, cf. 72 (des Places [1966], 94, 131).

17 For 'sabbath', cf. Isa. 66:23; for 'sabbaths', cf. Exod. 31:13; for 'sabbaths of sabbaths', cf. Lev. 16:31 (LXX).

18 For a more detailed analysis of the bulk of this *Difficulty,* see chapter 5 of the Introduction, below.

19 Makarios, *Hom.* 15.38 (ed. H.Dörries, E.Klostermann and M.Kroeger, Patristische Texte und Studien, 4, Berlin, 1964, pp. 149f.).

4
THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

1 See *Opusc.* 20: *PG* 91:237CD, 244C–245A; 28:328C–329B.

2 Translation from Tanner (1990), 86–7 (slightly modified).

3 For an account of the historical development of the *logos/tropos* distinction and its use by Maximus, see Sherwood (1955a), 155–66; and Heinzer (1980), 29–58.

4 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 39.13 [*PG* 36:348D]. Gregory's sermon is for the Feast of Lights, i.e., the Theophany (or the Epiphany).

5 See Andia (forthcoming). *Amb.* 10.31B-H makes this identification virtually explicit.

6 See Lethel (1979), esp. 31–5.

7 On this, see Heinzer (1980), 59–116.

8 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 43.

9 Gregory Nazianzen, *Letter* 101.32.

10 On Maximus' understanding of human willing, see Gauthier (1954) and, particularly on the question of how far Maximus is indebted to any earlier thought, J.D.Madden in Heinzer and Schönborn (1982), 61–79.

11 As Madden claims, op. cit., 79. This claim is presumably to be limited to the Greek tradition, as similar claims have been made for St Augustine in the West two centuries earlier (e.g., by Clark [1958]). The question of Maximus' relation to the great Western doctor is intriguing. Maximus spent more than twenty years in the West, fifteen of them in North Africa, where theology was still under the sway of Augustine, yet he never cites Augustine. There are, nevertheless, several possible points of contact between the two doctors of the Church, of which this question of human willing is one. See Berthold (1982).

12 *Opusc.* 26:277C and (in abbreviated form) 28:301C, taken more or less correctly from Diadochus of Photikê, *Century on Spiritual Knowledge* 5 (des Places [1966], 86).

13 *Opusc.* 26:276C. These definitions are not found in any of the works of Clement of Alexandria that have survived, and it may well be that they are really Maximus' own definitions of will ascribed, by himself or a pupil, to a figure from antiquity (one of these definitions is used by Maximus in *Opusc.* 3, translated below, without any suggestion that he has taken it from Clement of Alexandria). The status of '*Opusc.* 26' is quite unclear: it may consist of notes found in Maximus' papers and preserved by a disciple. The last two definitions of will in *Opusc.* 26 are ascribed to 'Saint' Maximus, which strongly suggests that we are dealing here with a later compilation. On this whole question of definitions of will provided by Maximus, see J.D.Madden, op. cit., 61–79.

5
COSMIC THEOLOGY

1 There is no need to give an elaborate bibliography, but there is a characteristically wide-ranging and thought-provoking article on what might be meant by a modern Orthodox cosmology by Olivier Clément in Clément (1967).

2 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione 7.*

3 Ibid.

4 *Tên eis to mê einai phthoran: De Incarnatione 4.*

5 It is instructive to contrast Athanasius' treatment of why repentance on Adam's part would have been insufficient with Anselm's treatment of the same problem in *Cur Deus homo* I. 20. Athanasius also mentions the offence done to God's honour, but the reason he gives for the inadequacy of repentance is based on the cosmic effects of Adam's sin: Anselm's reasoning turns entirely on the infinite offence done to God's honour by Adam's sin.

6 See esp. May (1978).

7 Origen, *On First Principles* II.8.3.

8 Ibid. I.6.2.

9 It is perhaps worth emphasizing that we have, in fact, no very clear idea from the Origenists themselves of their beliefs. The Origenism condemned by Justinian is the Origenism, not of Origen himself, but of Evagrius and his followers: see Guillaumont (1962), 124–70. This is presumably the Origenism faced by Maximus, though, as we shall see, occasionally what Maximus finds fault with seems more characteristic of Origen himself than of Evagrius.

10 For Maximus and Origenism see Sherwood (1955a), esp. 72–222. Sherwood argues against Balthasar's claim that Maximus had experienced a conversion *from* Origenism (for this, see esp. Balthasar [1961], 482–643, a modified reprint of the original article of 1940).

11 This is the argument of *Amb.* 15 (1216A–1221B); it is not so clearly expressed in the much longer (and presumably slightly earlier) *Amb. 7* (1068D–1101C).

12 See Gersh (1978), 218–22, 243–51.

13 See, e.g., *Amb.* 41–1308C.

14 Origen, *Homily of Exodus* 12. 4. See Louth (1981), 65–6.

15 Evagrius, *Gnostic Centuries* I.27.

16 See Daniélou (1954), 145–51.

17 On this see Balas (1966), 34–53.

18 E.g., *Ep.* 6:429D. And see on the whole subject, Thunberg (1965), 140–52.

19 Amy Clampitt, *Archaic Figure* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), 18.

20 For an exhaustive discussion of the reconciliation of these five divisions, see Thunberg (1965), 396–454.

21 For a much fuller discussion of the cosmic role of the humanity of Christ, see Heinzer (1980), 149–61.

22 See Riou (1973), 123–200.

23 This second part is sufficiently detailed for it to be possible to reconstruct the sequence of the liturgy of Maximus' day, as has been done in Brightman (1896), 534–9.

24 For a brief account of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* see Louth (1989), 52–77.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS

1 I owe this information to the kindness of B.Markesinis, who is working on the critical edition of the *Opuscula.*

2 Psa. (LXX) 1–8=Psa. (Heb.) 1–8; Psa. (LXX) 9=Psa. (Heb.) 9+10; Psa. (LXX) 10–112=Psa. (Heb.) 11–113; Psa. (LXX) 113=Psa. (Heb.) 114+115; Psa. (LXX) 114=Psa. (Heb.) 116:1–9; Psa. (LXX) 115=Psa. (Heb.) 116:10–19; Psa. (LXX) 116–145=Psa. (Heb.) 117–146; Psa. 146 (LXX)=Psa. (Heb.) 147:1–11; Psa. 147 (LXX)=Psa. (Heb.) 147:12–20; Psa. (LXX) 148–150=Psa. (Heb.) 148–150.

3 I have often been content with Migne references, especially where (as with the modern critical edition of Denys the Areopagite) these references are given in the modern editions anyway.

LETTER 2: ON LOVE

1 There is a French translation of this letter in Dalmais (1948), but I have not been able to consult it.
2 Cf. Rom. 13:10 and Matt. 22:40.
3 The incensive power.
4 'That which is within our power' *(to eph' êmin): see Amb.* 10, n. 122.
5 *Gnômê.*
6 Maximus was later, during the Monothelite controversy, to retract this way of putting the unity of will and inclination between God and the saints: see *Opusc.* 1:33A, where he retracts his reference to 'one activity of God and those worthy of God' (*Amb.* 7:1076C).
7 *stoicheion:* element or principle.
8 One of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs.
9 *Logos* and *tropos.*
10 This paragraph seems to be based on the idea, found in Philo, that the name Abraham means 'elect father of sound', signifying the good man's reasoning: see below *Amb.* 10.45 and n. 126.
11 This way of seeing virtue as a life in accordance with nature, or with the *logos,* is typically Stoic, and Maximus' language here has other Stoic echoes.
12 I.e., he led other human beings, viz. Sarah and the rest of his household, as he led himself, since they all possess the same human nature.
13 'Things that are after God': after, that is, in the scale of being. It is a Neoplatonic use, which in Christian (Maximian) metaphysics has the radical meaning of 'created beings'.
14 Cf. Luke 10:27 (not exact, the first part is much closer to Deut. 6:5).
15 Cf. John 14:6.
16 Cf. John 10:9, together with Heb. 9:11–12.
17 Cf. John 15:1, together with Rom. 11:17 (though Maximus does not use the more appropriate language of grafting from Romans).
18 One of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs.
19 1 John 4:8.
20 Cf Matt. 13:22 and parallels (parable of the Sower). Maximus may, however, have in mind (since he speaks of the thorns planted 'from the beginning') the immediately following parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30), even though he speaks of thorns rather than tares.
21 *Theosophia: a* word first found in Porphyry (who quotes an earlier use), popular among the Neoplatonists, and also used by Denys the Areopagite (e.g., *Mystical Theology* I.1:997A).
22 The Septuagint reads 'book'.
23 A cento from Jeremiah: Baruch 4:1–4, 3:14, Jer. 38 [Heb: 31]: 3–4, 6:16.
24 A cento composed of: Bar. 5:1–2, spliced with Eph. 4:22 and Col. 3:10.

DIFFICULTY 10

1 See chapter 5 of the Introduction.

2 Discussed above, chapter 4 of the Introduction.
3 See Jeauneau (1988), 10–11.
4 From St Gregory Nazianzen's *Sermon* 21.2, in praise of St Athanasius (*PG* 35.1084C).
5 This introduces a borrowing from Nemesius, *On human nature* 12 (Morani [1987], 68).
6 This again introduces a borrowing from Nemesius, *On human nature* 41 (Morani [1987], 117).
7 On these three kinds of motion of the soul, cf. Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* IV.8–10 (704D–705C), who calls the three kinds of motion circular, in a straight line, and spiral. See Gersh (1978), 253, n. 229.
8 'With reference to cause': *kat' aitian.* Proclus distinguishes between predication *kat' aitian, kath' hyparxin* (by existence or possession), and *kata methexin* (by participation): *Elements of Theology* 65 (Dodds [1963], 62; see his commentary, ibid. 235–6). The distinction is also found in Denys the Areopagite: e.g., *Ep.* 9.2:1108D.
9 Here, as elsewhere, *philanthrôpic,*
10 *Gnômê.*
11 Maximus' mind has moved from the cloud that led the people of Israel in the wilderness to the crossing of the Red Sea dryshod (Exod. 14:15–29), perhaps because the pillar of cloud is first mentioned in this passage (see verse 19).
12 See Exod. 14:15–29.
13 See Exod. 19:16–20. Discussion of this passage has a long tradition: see Philo, *Life of Moses* II.70–166, Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* II.152–201, Denys the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology* I.3.
14 For this absolute use of 'was' (Greek: *ên*), see the n. 101, below.
15 Not included in Migne. Text taken from Sherwood (1955a), 41, who prints it from a MS in the Vatican Library. For the scriptural text discussed, see Exod. 12:34, 39.
16 See Joshua 3:14–17.
17 Called in English bibles 'Joshua'. The LXX form 'Jesus' makes evident the typological relationship between the Old Testament leader of Israel, who succeeded Moses, and Christ, which Maximus develops in what follows. The two forms of the name are simply the Hebrew and Greek forms. In Greek Joshua is called 'Jesus, son of Navê' if there is danger of unclarity.
18 Joshua 5:2–3.
19 Israel: the name taken to mean 'one who sees God', a common interpretation: see Philo, *On the Allegories of the Laws* II.34, III.15, 172, 186, 212 and frequently elsewhere.
20 Joshua 6.
21 In English bibles, Achan, son of Carmi.
22 In English bibles, Hazor.
23 One of the Origenist errors condemned in the sixth century was that the heavenly bodies had souls: Anathema 6 in Justinian's Edict (Denzinger and Schönmetzer [1976], 406). See Scott (1991).

24 Providence and judgment are associated as a pair in Origenist theory. See chapter 5 of the Introduction.
25 3 Kgd 19:9 ff.
26 Probably an echo of both the chariot in which Elijah ascends into heaven in 4 Kgd 2:11, and of the chariot of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus* (246A–C).
27 Cf. 4 Kgd 2:1ff.
28 Probably commenting on 4 Kgd 1:9–12, but alluding also to 4 Kgd 6:15–17.
29 Cf. 1 Kgd 1:9–20.
30 Cf. Lev. 14:33–42.
31 Cf. 3 Kgd 17:8–24.
32 Cf. Matt. 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36.
33 Cf. Isa. 53:2.
34 Cf. Psa. 44:3.
35 Cf. John 1:1.
36 *Apophasis:* Maximus introduces here the technical terms of apophatic and cataphatic theology.
37 Cf. John 1:14.
38 This section develops the theme just introduced in the dual interpretation of the radiant garments of the Transfigured Christ as both Scriptures and creation.
39 The Evagrian triad of ascetic struggle *(praktikê),* natural contemplation *(physikê),* and theology was related by Origen to a very similar classification of the categories of philosophy in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs:* see Louth (1981), 57–8.
40 Cf. Denys the Areopagite, *Ep.* 9.1 (1105D).
41 Literally: in a Greek way. It is in contrast with the later 'in a Jewish way': cf. St Paul's contrast between Greeks/Gentiles and Jews, especially in Rom. 1–3.
42 Cf. Phil. 3.19.
43 A metaphor for the Incarnation used by Gregory Nazianzen in *Sermon* 38.2 (*PG* 36:313B). Maximus devotes a *Difficulty* to Gregory's use of the term (suspected of Origenism?): *Amb.* 33:1285C–1288A, where the Word's expressing itself in letters and words is one of the interpretations offered of the metaphor.
44 Cf. Gen. 39:11–12.
45 This is an important section in which Maximus reworks a fundamental Evagrian theme. For Evagrius, the five modes of contemplation are: 1. contemplation of the adorable and holy Trinity, 2. and 3. contemplation of incorporeal and incorporeal beings, 4. and 5. contemplation of judgment and providence (*Centuries on Spiritual Knowledge* I.27, in Guillaumont [1958]). Maximus' understanding is quite different. See Thunberg (1965), 69–75 and Gersh (1978), 226–7.
46 I do not know where Maximus gets these five secret meanings (or hidden *logoi*) from. They recall Plato's 'five greatest kinds' (being, rest, motion, sameness and difference: see *Sophist* 254D–255C), but are evidently not the same.
47 One of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs.

48 Cf. the Dionysian triad, being-life-wisdom, (*Divine Names* V–VII), though Maximus inverts the second and third members.
49 That is, they learn the distinction between being and person ('mode of existence') in the Trinitarian Godhead.
50 See above, n. 39.
51 For Melchisedec, see Gen. 14:18–20, Psa. 109:4, Heb. 6:20–7:22.
52 *Pathôn:* cf. Denys the Areopagite's account of his master Hierotheus in *Divine Names* III.2 (681D–684A).
53 An allusion to Psa. 50:6?
54 *Gnômê:* usually translated 'inclination'.
55 Filling in a lacuna in the Migne text from Sherwood (1955a), 41.
56 Cf. Rom. 8:6f.
57 Cf. Luke 9:24. The Greek word *psychê* (translated here 'soul') can equally mean 'life', as Maximus' comments indicate.
58 In taking over the text of Hebrews, Maximus seems to have assimilated the word 'altar' to Greek liturgical use, according to which it is a *place* (what is called in the West the sanctuary), rather than an altar *on* which something is sacrificed.
59 Cf. Prov. 9:1–6.
60 Cf. Gen. 12:1.
61 Cf. Gen. 13:17.
62 Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 28.6 (*PG* 36:22C).
63 Note the pairing of providence and the economy in this sentence.
64 Cf. Exod. 2:3.
65 Cf. Exod. 2:10.
66 Cf. Exod. 2:12.
67 Cf. Matt. 13:24ff.
68 Cf. Exod. 3:1.
69 Cf. Exod. 3:2ff.
70 The interpretation of the Burning Bush as prefiguring the Virginal Conception of the Mother of God is traditional and goes back at least to Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* II.21.
71 Note again the pairing of providence and economy (cf. n. 63, above).
72 This account of 'mystical theology' is reminiscent of Denys the Areopagite (*Mystical Theology* I.1) and Denys' sources, especially Gregory of Nyssa, but it is not a quotation.
73 Cf. section 18 above.
74 That is the holy men, the patriarchs and prophets, of the Old Testament.
75 2 Kgd 24:10ff., or possibly 2 Kgd 12:15ff.
76 4 Kgd 20:2ff.
77 This is really on the division of creation, but ends by showing how God is transcendent over it: which is presumably the point. Cf. also *Amb.* 41, below.
78 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* I.270, III.6.62 (Jaeger [1960], 1. 105, 2.66) and frequently elsewhere in Gregory of Nyssa.
79 Cf. Luke 10:30–7.
80 Cf. Gen. 2:17.

81 Eriugena distinguishes between *speculatio* and *theoria*—translated here 'contemplation' and 'spiritual interpretation'. *Theoria* could well be translated 'contemplation', but it is the regular word in the Antiochene tradition for spiritual interpretation, and is used in that sense here. The eighteen spiritual interpretations seem to consist of ten numbered ones (in 31a), and the seven sections that follow (31b-h) plus the introduction to 31a.
82 Cf. 4 Kgd 2:11.
83 For time as number, see Aristotle, *Physics* 4.11.
84 Cf. Psa. 94:11; Heb. 3:16–4:1.
85 For this understanding of the relationship of time to eternity (derived from Plato's metaphor of time as a 'moving image of eternity'), see Plato, *Timaeus* 37D; Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.2; Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* X.3.
86 Cf. Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals* I.5.
87 This introduces the theme of the two modes of theology—apophatic and cataphatic—which continues through to section 31e (cf. above section 17, and also below *Amb.* 71)
88 *Theourgiai:* to be taken in the Christian sense, found in Denys the Areopagite, of 'divine works', rather than in its pagan meaning of 'ritual ceremonies'. See Louth (1986).
89 The oneness and threeness of the Godhead: discussed below in section 43, and in *Amb.* 1.
90 Presumably the account of the Transfiguration.
91 Cf. Luke 9:31.
92 Cf. Luke 16:19–31.
93 This is borrowed, more or less word for word, from Nemesius, *On human nature* 43 (Morani [1987], 129, ll. 6–14).
94 Omitting the two sections, 1173B–1176B, which are identical with Amb. 53 and Amb. 63. They are not found in this *Difficulty* in Eriugena nor are they found in Vat. gr. 1502 and other MSS: they are clearly out of place here. See Sherwood (1955a), 32. Sections 35–40 have many parallels with the early chapters of John Damascene's *Exposition of the Faith* (chapters 3–5, 9, 11–13).
95 The rest of this section is fairly closely dependent on Nemesius, *On human nature* 42 (Morani [1987], 120, I. 25–121, I. 6)
96 For this argument for the unmoved mover, see Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.5, *Metaphysics* F.8.
97 'Constituent powers' *(systatikai dynameis)*: relating to essence or being as accidents to substance. See Gersh (1978), 247, n. 205.
98 Maximus sees *diastolê* as moving down the branches of the 'Tree of Porphyry' and *systolê* as moving up it. The 'Tree of Porphyry', taken from Porphyry's *Introduction* to Aristotle's *Categories,* represents the various universals as an interrelated structure—a kind of 'tree'—with the more specific universals as branches of the more general universals.
99 Cf. John Damascene, *Exposition of the Faith* 13.
100 This introduces a borrowing from Nemesius, *On human nature* 3 (Morani [1987], 41–2), also cited by John Damascene, *Exposition of the*

Faith 13 (Kotter [1973], 37). This definition of place ultimately derives from Aristotle, *Physics* IV.4.

101 Maximus here and elsewhere (e.g. in sections 5 and 40) seems to use the third person singular imperfect of 'to be' *(ên)* in an absolute way to mean 'exists eternally'. I do not think this is a Neoplatonic usage— Plotinus regards eternity (let alone the One) as being beyond past and future tense, and characterized by an absolute use of the present tense (see *Enneads* III.7.3.34–6). It is, perhaps, a Christian usage, derived from John 1:1 (*En archêi* ên *ho logos*): Cyril of Alexandria, in his *Commentary on St John's Gospel,* comments that 'Used of God, the word "was" introduces the meaning of his absolute eternity, his being older than any temporal beginning, and removes the thought that he might be made' (Book 1, c.7, on John 1:6f.: Pusey [1872], I.91, II. 5–8). It is also found in the *scholia* on the *Corpus Areopagiticum,* ascribed to Maximus (many of which are, however, by John of Scythopolis): on *Divine Names* 5.8 (which explains how tenses apply to God), we read: '"He was", and what is understood to be included in this, agrees with nothing else than God, because "he was", considered as anterior to every beginning' (*PG* 4. 328A8–11), which is very close to Cyril, but not actually a citation: see also 316BC where the use of *ên* is justified specifically in relation to John 1:1, though it is not explained there what it means.

102 Cf. Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* V.8:824A.

103 From here to the end of the section Maximus engages in a complicated argument against the possibility of uncreated matter which, he argues, would possess being from itself, but not form: out of which he constructs a *reductio ad absurdum.*

104 See n. 101, above.

105 This way of speaking of an ultimate unity (the monad) and an ultimate duality (the dyad), according to Maximus derived from the monad, goes back to Pythagoras, and was current in Neoplatonic circles (influenced, as they were, by the second-century revival of Pythagoreanism).

106 The text in Migne marks no division here. This is taken from Eriugena's version.

107 For this triad *(ousia, dynamis, energeia)* of Neoplatonic inspiration, see: lamblichus, *On the Mysteries of Egypt* II.1; Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 169; Denys the Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy* XI.2, *Divine Names* IV.1, 23. See also Sherwood (1955a), 103–16.

108 Denys the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names,* 13.3. I have assimilated the text given in Migne to the text of the new critical edition: Suchla (1990), 229.

109 See Denys the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names,* 4.4 (Suchla [1990], 148, l.15): 'as each to its own goal' is, in fact, an exact citation.

110 The material in this section is mainly drawn from Nemesius, *On human nature* 42–4. John Damascene also draws on these chapters from Nemesius (apparently quite independently of Maximus) in his discussion of providence in *Exposition of the Faith* 43.

111 *Diamonê, taxis, thesis, kinêsis:* cf. Nemesius, *On human nature* 42 (Morani [1987], 120, l.25–121, l.2), though Nemesius has *phora* instead of *kinêsis:* see *Amb.* 10.35 (1176BC), above.

112 The definitions of providence are taken directly from Nemesius, *On human nature* 42 (Morani [1987], 125, ll. 4–8); they also appear in John Damascene, *Exposition of the Faith* 43, ll. 2–6 (Kotter [1973], 100).

113 Byzantines distinguished between the 'outer' and the 'inner' learning: the 'outer learning' was pagan philosophy—either classical or late antique—the 'inner learning' was Christian theology. The distinction is mainly polemical, since both inner and outer learning were indebted to Greek philosophy, esp. Plato and the Neoplatonists. For a discussion of this distinction in the later Byzantine period, see D.M.Nicol, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 2. Those who limit providence are principally the followers of Aristotle (see n. 114, below). The idea that providence is limited to the realm above the moon was popularized in the influential treatise *On the world,* ascribed to Aristotle.

114 A view regularly ascribed to Aristotle in late antiquity and the Byzantine period. Nemesius (on whom Maximus is drawing) discusses Aristotle's views on providence in *On human nature* 43 (Morani [1987], 127ff.)

115 As Nemesius says: *On human nature* 43 (Morani [1987], 130, ll. 7–10). Maximus has modified Nemesius' first reason.

116 A Stoic idea, that became a commonplace in much late ancient philosophy.

117 This sentence is very close to Nemesius, *On human nature* 43 (Morani

118 Another sentence drawn directly from Nemesius, *On human nature* 43 (Morani [1987], 133, ll. 2–5).

119 Maximus now returns to the text from Gregory Nazianzen's sermon to discuss the final phrase about passing beyond the material dyad. Gregory uses this imagery in other sermons, notably *Sermon* 23.4, which is the subject of other *Ambigua: Arab.* 23, from the early set, and from the later set, *Amb.* 1, translated below.

120 This notion of a Trinitarian image of God in man—which is reminiscent of Augustine (see *On the Trinity* 9–10)—is derived from Gregory Nazianzen (*Sermon* 23.11; *PG* 35:1161C) and found elsewhere in Maximus (e.g. *Quaestiones et dubia* 105: Declerck [1982], 80), who bequeathed it to John Damascene (*Exposition of the Faith* 26: Kotter [1973], 76. In Byzantine theology it never attained the influence that Augustine's conception exercised in Western medieval theology.

121 Most of this chapter is *a précis* of Nemesius, *On human nature* 15–22 (Morani [1987], 72–82): Maximus begins with chapter 22. The material appears again, in a form that is indebted to Nemesius, independently of whatever debt it owes to Maximus, in John Damascene, *Exposition of the Faith,* 26–30 (Kotter [1987], 75–83).

122 Literally: is not 'within us' *(en hêmin),* an important category in Maximus' ethics. It occurs, too, in Nemesius, *On human nature* 26 (Morani [1987], 87, l. 22], whose normal expression is, however, *eph'*

hêmin (see *On human nature* 39 [Morani, 112–14]), which is found in Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics.,* III.3.6; 1112a31).

123 *Spoudaios:* a term of ultimately Stoic provenance. It is not easy to translate: it means one who is striving after the virtue, in contrast both to those who are making no effort, and (in its original Stoic context) to those—the wise—who have achieved virtue. 'Serious' or 'earnest' are the best English has to offer.

124 Maximus provides an etymological explanation for the term for resentment—*mênis*—deriving it from *menein* ('to remain') and *mnêmê* ('memory').

125 Similarly, Maximus derives the word for rancour—*kotos—from keisthai* ('to lie down').

126 In Gen. 17:5, as a sign of his covenant with Abraham, God changes his name from Abram to Abraham, as the names are represented in English bibles. In the LXX the change is from Abram to Abraam, i.e. there is addition of the letter alpha. According to Philo, Abram meant 'uplifted father' and Abraham 'elect father of sound', signifying the good man's reasoning (see *On the Giants* 62–4, and elsewhere).

127 An echo of Plotinus' 'flight of the alone to the Alone' (*Enneads,* VI.9.11).

128 What Maximus means by this is that Abraham's ascent to God involves rejection of everything apart from God, something aptly signified by the letter alpha, which in Greek is used as a prefix to indicate negation (the 'alpha privative').

129 Lev. 7:30. Maximus follows the LXX, which differs from the Hebrew (and English bibles based on it), in mentioning the lobe of the liver, in addition to the fat and the breast. Maximus' comments are only loosely based on the Scriptural text (which does not mention the kidneys, even in the LXX), and really go back to classical philosophy. But Plato links the incensive power with the heart, and the desiring power with the liver (*Timaeus.* 70A–72C) and the same linking is found in Nemesius, Maximus' usual source (see *On human nature* 16, Morani [1987], 73, ll. 12f.). Maximus seems to accept the link between the incensive power and the heart above, section 44. Galen maintained that the liver was the source of the blood, which might lie behind Maximus' association of the liver and the incensive power (see Taylor [1928], 503).

130 This section is based on Lev. 13, a long discussion of the diagnosis and treatment of leprosy.

131 Num. 25:6–9.

132 See Num. 25:14f. Maximus' interpretation of Zambri (in English bibles Zimri) is traditional: see Wutz (1914–15), 420. Chasbi (English bibles: Cozbi) is usually interpreted as meaning 'deceitful' (see Wutz [1914–15], 951).

133 Cf. Matt. 10:10, Luke 9:3, 10:4, though the text as Maximus cites it agrees exactly with none of these.

134 Following the emendation suggested in Migne.

135 See Matt. 17:14–21.

136 For the word translated 'epileptic' literally means 'pertaining to the moon' (and therefore 'lunatic' in older English translations).

137 Cf. Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* II.11; IV.7, 10, 14; X.1.
138 Cf. the teaching in *Ep.* 2, above, esp. 396A (p.86).

DIFFICULTY 41

1 There is a translation of most of this *Difficulty* (all apart from the final contemplation) in Hausherr (1952), 164–70, which I have found helpful.
2 From St Gregory Nazianzen's *Sermon* 39.13, on the Feast of Lights (i.e., the Theophany, or Epiphany) (*PG* 36.348D).
3 For these divisions, cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I.270–2, III. 6.62–7 (Jaeger [1960], 1.105–6, 2.66–7), and elsewhere, and the discussion above, Introduction, chapter 5. *Amb.* 10.26, above, also develops the notion of the divisions of being and alludes to similar texts in Gregory of Nyssa.
4 See Gregory of Nyssa, *On human creation* 2 (*PG* 44:133A).
5 *Syndesmos:* a key term in Maximus' theology, used by Nemesius, *On human nature* 1 (Morani [1987], 5).
6 *Diastêma:* another key term of Maximus'.
7 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On human creation* 16 (*PG* 44:181 AB).
8 It sounds odd to refer to the human person as 'it', but Maximus is talking about a human person transcending sexual differentiation, which would be obscured by the use of 'he' or 'she'.
9 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On human creation* 17 (*PG* 44:189A and D), and frequently elsewhere.
10 *Perichôrêsas:* used also in the Greek tradition to express the interpenetration of the natures of Christ, and the Persons of the Trinity (cf. Latin: *circumincessio*).
11 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *On human creation* 17, 22 (*PG* 44:189AB, 205A).
12 Reading *timiôtata,* not *atimiôtata.* See Hausherr (1952), 169n.
13 Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* 13.2 (980A).

DIFFICULTY 71

1 Last lines of Gerard Manley Hopkins' sonnet, 'As kingfishers catch fire'.
2 From the poems of St Gregory of Nazianzus, *To the Virgins* 2 (*PG* 37: 624). There is a critical text neither of Maximus nor of Gregory's poems: I have translated what seems to me the most plausible reading.
3 'Prudence': *phronêsis,* which I have usually translated 'sagacity', but here the opposition with play suggests prudence (the usual Latin translation of *phronêsis* being *prudentia*).
4 Maximus here is using the technical language of apophatic and cataphatic theology, first found among Christians in Denys the Areopagite: 'negation' translates *apophasis* and 'affirmation' *kataphasis.*
5 Maximus underlines here and several times later the conjectural quality of his reflections here (the word he uses is *stochastikôs*).
6 See the previous note.

7 By which Maximus seems to mean what was from the beginning and what will be at the end.
8 This is the subject of the lines in Gregory's poem that immediately precede those discussed in this *Difficulty*.
9 See Luke 16.26.
10 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 41.12 [on Holy Pentecost] (*PG* 36:445).
11 Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names* 4.12 (712AB). Note that Maximus interprets this passage of the Incarnation. In a recent book, Catherine Osborne has argued—correctly it seems to me—that this is a misinterpretation of the Areopagite (Osborne [1994], 195–200). It is interesting that such a Christological interpretation is found so early.
12 'Play', then, seems to take the place in the Evagrian scheme of ascetic struggle, leading, as it does, to natural contemplation, and finally to theology.
13 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 7.19 [on the death of his brother Caesarius] (*PG* 35:777).

DIFFICULTY 1

1 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 29.2 (*PG* 36.76). Also commented on in *Amb.* 23 (1257C–1261C), and alluded to in *Amb.* 10.43, above.
2 In fact, the third.
3 Idem. *Sermon* 23.8 (*PG* 35.1160). This could be punctuated to read: 'The monad is moved because of its wealth and the dyad is superseded (that is, [the monad, presumably, passes] beyond matter and form, out of which bodies are made). The triad is defined on account of its perfection.'
4 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 40.5 [on baptism] (*PG* 36.364).
5 The temptation to translate *enhypostatos* (here and elsewhere) as 'existing in persons' (or 'existing as persons'), under the influence of the once-popular theory of 'enhypostasia', should probably be resisted: *enhypostatos* is best taken as the opposite of *anhypostatos* in its basic meaning of 'non-existent' (*pace* Lampe [1961] s.v. *enhypostatos,* B.2). This was argued by B.E.Daley, in relation to Leontius of Byzantium, to whom, since Loofs, the doctrine of 'enhypostasia' has been ascribed, in a paper at the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies (1979), that has never been published. I am grateful to the author for a copy of it, which is summarized in Grillmeier (1989), 204–8. Maximus certainly, however, intends a play on words between the monad as *enhypostatos ontotês homoousiou Triados* and the triad as *enousios hyparxis trishypostatou monados* (see chapter 4 of the Introduction).
6 Another play on words: the tri-hypostatic triad is monad, because it *is* (from the verb that provides *ousia,* 'substance or essence'), and the one-substance monad is triad, because it *subsists* (from the verb that provides *hypostasis,* 'person').
7 'Mode': *tropos.* There is an allusion here to the Cappadocian Definition of person *(hypostasis)* as 'mode of existence' *(tropos tês hyparxeôs).*

DIFFICULTY 5

1 There is an analysis of this *Difficulty* by E.Bellini, in Heinzer and Schönborn (1982), 37–49.
2 Denys the Areopagite, *Ep.* 4:1072A.
3 'Mode' has been used throughout this *Amb.* to translate *tropos*. 'Mode of existence' *(tropos tês hyparxeôs)* is used by the Cappadocians as equivalent to *hypostasis* (see chapter 4 of the Introduction, above). Throughout this *Amb.* Maximus makes a consistent distinction between *logos* which characterizes nature, and *tropos* (mode) which characterizes the person. It is part of the 'Cappadocian' or 'Chalcedonian' logic that Maximus strives to use in a systematic way.
4 I have been unable to locate this precise form of words in Denys the Areopagite.
5 From this point on Maximus comments on Denys' *Ep.* 4, phrase by phrase: the quotations are from this epistle, unless otherwise identified.
6 This word, *proslêpsis* (literally: something added), is regularly used in the Fathers to refer to the human nature assumed by the Word in the Incarnation.
7 Members of a dualist-gnostic sect founded by Mani (*c.* 216–276), that was particularly influential in the fourth and fifth centuries. They were universally (and probably correctly) regarded by the Fathers of the Church as Christian heretics. It was alleged they regarded Christ as a mere phantom. They are thus frequently associated with Monophysites by the Orthodox: a tradition strikingly represented by Pope Leo (see Grillmeier [1987], 172–94). Much play was naturally made of the similarity of his name with the Greek for madness *(mania)*.
8 Apollinaris was a fourth-century heretic, who denied that Christ had a human soul, its place being taken by the Word of God. It was also generally believed by the Orthodox (wrongly, in fact) that he maintained that Christ brought his flesh down with him from heaven, as mentioned here (see Grillmeier [1975], 330–333).
9 A quotation from the previous letter of Denys: *Ep.* 3:1069B.
10 Allusion to Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 39.13—'The natures are instituted afresh, and God becomes man'—discussed by Maximus in *Amb.* 41, above.
11 Here Maximus is interpreting the account in the Gospels of Jesus' walking on the water (Matt. 14:25ff. and parallels). His interpretation is very like that of the 'Monophysite' Severus of Antioch, *Ep.* 1 to Sergius: 'For how will anyone divide walking upon the water? For to run upon the sea is foreign to the human nature, but it is not proper to the divine nature to use bodily feet. Therefore that action is of the Incarnate Word, to whom belongs at the same time divine character and humanity indivisibly' (trans. in Torrance [1988], 154).
12 According to Denys, all negation *(apophasis)* in respect of God is made transcendently *(kath' hyperochên)*: see, e.g., *Divine Names* 7.2:869A.

13 This is a good definition of what has been called the doctrine of *enhypostasia,* but I do not think that Maximus uses *enhypostatos* in this way. See *Amb.* 1, n. 5, above.
14 Here, and elsewhere in this section, Maximus uses (or sometimes alludes to) the four adverbs used in the Chalcedonian Definition to express the integrity and genuine union of the two natures of Christ: without confusion, without change, without division, without separation *(asynchytôs, atreptôs, adiairetôs, achôristôs).*
15 Denys the Areopagite, *Divine Names,* 8.5 (893A).
16 Maximus is fond of this formulation of the relationship of the natures to the person of the Incarnate Word. Although the Council of Chalcedon said that Christ is recognized 'in two natures', the original version, followed by many Greek manuscripts, was 'out of two natures'. Maximus combines them, and adds an assertion of direct identity. See Piret (1983), 203–39.
17 *Theotokos:* literally, one who gave birth to God.
18 'Intention', here and later in the sentence, is *gnômê,* the intention, or inclination, that lies behind our voluntary acts.
19 'Theandric': an adjective, not invented by Denys, but popularized by his use of it in *Ep.*4, formed from the words for God *(Theos)* and [male] man (*anêr,* root: *andr-*) to characterize the person and indivisible activity of Jesus, God made man.
20 The supporters of Severus of Antioch ('Monophysites') quoted the last few words of Denys' *Ep.* 4 in support of their Christology at the council called by Justinian at Constantinople in 532. But they quoted it in the form 'one theandric energy', rather than 'a certain new theandric energy'. It is this that Maximus is attacking here.
21 The Greek is actually 'goat-stag': I have substituted our more familiar 'eagle-lion', the griffin.
22 The analogy of the iron in the fire for the union of the natures in the Incarnation is traditional in Christian theology: see, e.g., Origen, *On First Principles* II.6.6.
23 *Amb.* 5 is the last of the later *Ambigua,* and this conclusion, addressed to Thomas, to whom the work is dedicated, and his other readers, is the conclusion of the whole work.
24 Isa. 9:5 (LXX, according to the Alexandrine text, which is the one used in the Eastern Church).

OPUSCULE 7

1 On the question of whether the various pieces addressed to Marinus are addressed to the same person, see Sherwood (1952), 34.
2 Possibly an allusion to the words said by the priest in the Byzantine liturgy as the warm water (the *zeon*) is added to the consecrated wine in the chalice before communion: see Brightman (1896), 394. This custom was probably introduced in the sixth century, and this may be the earliest evidence for it: see Wybrew (1989), 87–8.

3 The 'earth of the heart' is imagery stemming ultimately from the Macarian Homilies: see, e.g., Collection I.3.3.8–9 (Berthold [1973], 31–2).

4 Cf. Luke 12:49.

5 In *Opusc.* 3 (below), this reference to the coldness of the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies appears to be derived from the name Severus and the region of the north which seems to be associated with that name (the region of the north is surely alluded to here as well). Could Maximus possibly be deriving Severus' name from the Slavonic word for the north, *sever?* It is quite unclear how Maximus might have known this, but during his days as *protoasecretis* he must have had some knowledge of the Slav tribes that by then had been settling south of the Danube in the *Sklaviniae* for some decades.

6 Perhaps an allusion to James 2:8.

7 An allusion to two of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs.

8 Although this passage has clear allusions to the Chalcedonian Definition, there seem to be even clearer allusions to the language of both the Alexandrian Pact of Union and the *Ecthesis* itself.

9 Here, not *Theotokos* but *Theomêtêr*.

10 The Chalcedonian Definition asserted that Christ is known 'in two natures'. The original draft had 'out of two natures', and this is preserved in most of the Greek manuscripts. Maximus characteristically combines them, and often adds a straight assertion of identity ('from which and in which *and which* he is): see Piret (1983), 203–39.

11 The Monophysites conceded that in Christ two natures came together, but that after the union they became a single composite nature, and so were no longer two.

12 The Fathers universally held that the idea that Christ's humanity pre-existed and descended with the Word in the Incarnation was a corollary of Apollinarianism, though it seems clear that Apollinaris intended no such thing (see Grillmeier [1975], 330–3). Maximus repeats the calumny against his Monophysite and Monothelite opponents, with probably as little justification.

13 Maximus probably has in mind Rom. 11:16.

14 For the *Ecthesis,* see the introduction.

15 Quoted by Sophronius: *Synodical Letter* (*PG* 87:3173B). It has not been found in Gregory of Nyssa's extant works.

16 Much closer to Luke 22:42 than the other Gospels, but not exact.

17 Cyril, *Commentary on St John's Gospel,* book 10, on John 14:21 (Pusey [1872], II. 493), cited in session 10 of the sixth Ecumenical Council (Riedinger [1990], 326).

18 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation and against the Arians* 21. Some doubt has been expressed as to whether this treatise is genuine, but it still has its defenders. It was cited at the 10th session of the sixth Ecumenical Council (Riedinger [1990], 298).

19 Athanasius here conflates the words of Jesus' prayer to the Father (Matt. 26:39) with his words to the sleeping disciples (Matt. 26:41).

20 Gregory is here referring to the Son, who has come down to do the will of the One who sent him (John 6:38).

21 Maximus omits the word 'to God' in his citation of Gregory, in context taking it for granted.

22 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 30.12, cited at the 10th session of the sixth Ecumenical Council (Riedinger [1990], 330). It is discussed again, below, in *Opusc.* 3.

23 This is not at all what Gregory had in mind: he was arguing against Arians (or more precisely Eunomians), who argued that the distinction between the will of the Son and the will of the Father contradicted the doctrine of their consubstantiality.

24 Christ's human will is natural, but does not (like fallen human wills) work through an intention arrived at after deliberation, that is through a *gnômê:* so I have translated *gnômikon* here as 'deliberative'.

25 Probably a reference to the Monophysite reading '*one* theandric energy' for 'a certain new theandric energy' in Denys' *Ep.* 4 (see *Amb.* 5, above).

26 The quotations in this paragraph are from Cyril of Alexandria's discussion of the raising of Jaïrus' daughter (Luke 8:49–56) and the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11–15) in his *Commentary on St John's Gospel,* book 4, c. 2, on John 6:53 (Pusey [1872], I. 530). This passage is also included in the late-seventh-century *florilegium,* the *Doctrina Patrum* (Diekamp [1981], 131).

27 Maximus often refers his teaching to a 'wise man'. Here, however, he seems to be referring to St Cyril of Alexandria; elsewhere, it seems to be rather a question of someone he knew, perhaps, it has been suggested, Sophronius.

28 Cf. Prov. 22:28 ('You shall not alter the eternal boundaries, that your fathers set up'), also quoted by St John of Damascus at the end of the first chapter of his *Expositio fidei.*

29 Frequently used by Cyril of Alexandria and a watch-word for those of his followers who rejected the Christological Definition of Chalcedon: see Wickham (1983), 62, n. 3.

30 From Denys the Areopagite, *Ep.* 4, discussed above, 84D–85B (pp. 188–9).

31 From Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on St. John's Gospel,* discussed above, 85C–88A (p.189).

OPUSCULE 3

1 This opuscule is a chapter from a work *On Energies and Wills,* like *Opuscule* 2, which is chapter 50. The complete work no longer survives.

2 A characteristically Maximian allusion to two of the 'Chalcedonian' adverbs.

3 A definition of will, ascribed by Maximus to Clement of Alexandria in *Opusc.* 26 (276C).

4 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 30.12, commented on above, *Opusc.* 7 (81C).

5 Possibly an echo of Isa. 9:5 and Eph. 1:11.
6 Composite quotation from Matt. 26:39 and Luke 22:42.
7 Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon* 39.13: the subject of *Amb.* 41, above.
8 Dualist-gnostic teaching established by Mani: see *Amb.* 5, n. 7 (pp.214–15, above).
9 Apollinaris (*c.* 310–*c.* 390) taught that Christ had no human soul, but that its place was taken by the Word of God. Behind this teaching lies a desire to emphasize the unity of Christ, and some of his writings (circulating under the name of Athanasius) were influential among Cyril of Alexandria and his followers. The Apollinarian 'forgeries' were exposed in the sixth century in a work once ascribed to Leontius of Byzantium.
10 Eutyches was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon for his insistence that after the union there is only one nature in Christ.
11 Maximus probably spent some time in Crete on his way to Africa, where he arrived 628–30. See the Introduction, chapter 1.
12 Zach. 2:10, 11 (LXX).
13 Quite why Maximus associates Severus with the north (and elsewhere with the northern characteristics of freezing cold and darkness) is unclear. It is tempting to think that he was aware of the Slavonic word for the north, *sever*. See above, *Opusc.* 7, n. 5.
14 The contrast here between theology and economy is a traditional one in Greek theology: theology means strictly the doctrine of God, especially the Trinity; the economy refers to God's dealings with humankind, especially the Incarnation.
15 The heresy traditionally called Sabellianism, to which Maximus later refers.
16 Because Arius (*c.* 260–336), condemned at the Council of Nicaea (325), denied the consubstantiality of Father and Son, and yet maintained that in some sense the Son is divine, he is often accused of ditheism (or, as here, of polytheism).
17 Sabellius (third century) denied personal distinctions in the Godhead. Maximus has already shown how Severus' teaching could lead to Sabellianism: see n. 15 above.
18 Matt. 15:13.
19 What Maximus means, I think, is that Nestorius affirms a union of *gnomic* qualities, and Severus the difference of natural *qualities:* i.e., Nestorius sees a union in which the divine and the human make up their own minds, so to speak, to come into agreement, whereas, after the union, Severus only admits the difference of natural *qualities,* such as thirst, speaking, the colour of the hair, but maintains that the divine and human natures cannot be distinguished.

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For works of Maximus frequently cited I have used the following abbreviations:

Amb.=Ambigua (Books of Difficulties)

AL=On the Ascetic Life

CC=Centuries on Love

CT=Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of

God

Ep.=Epistula

LP=On the Lord's Prayer

Myst.=Mystagogia

Opusc.=Opuscula thcologica etpolemica

QT=Questions to Thalassius

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